

**ANALYSIS OF INCESSANT STRIKE ACTIONS ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF
HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA (2010-2020):
IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH PRACTICES AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF**

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Abstract

The study carried out the analysis of incessant strike actions on the sustainability of Higher education in Nigeria (2010-2020) and examined the implications for research practices among academic staff. A descriptive survey research design of the ex-post facto type was used and the study population comprised 2931 academic staff from eight (4 federal and 4 state) universities in Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta States in South-South Nigeria. The study adopted a survey instrument titled 'Causes and Possible Danger of ASUU Strike Questionnaire.' The face and content validity of the instrument was established by subjecting it to expert scrutiny and the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients of the instrument for the different sub-scales ranged from .87 to .93. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics (simple percentages and bar charts). The findings revealed that the trends of strike action from 2010-2020 are significantly negative on the academic standard of the states in the South-South and Nigeria in general; to a large extent, lecturers effectively carry out their research activities during strike actions. Also, lecturers have a negative perception of their effectiveness in research practices during the strike; ASUU strikes ultimately pose some negative danger to the education sector of the country. Finally, irrespective of this danger, imminent ASUU strikes can be sustained while enhancing research productivity particularly as Nigeria is not rated among the first 31st research countries based on the global research index. It was recommended

among others that Academic research scholars should collaborate with other scholars nationally and internationally on how to source alternative funding and sharpen their grant-seeking and research-delivering capacity that will enable uninterrupted research practices even in times of strikes. This will help to reduce incessant strike actions in the country.

Keywords: *Incessant strike action, sustainability implication, tertiary education, research practice, Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is seen as a tool for global peace, economic development and national security. This is because countries like China, United States of America, Russia, and France which have occupied the global space in the 21st century are those that craved quality education. Access to quality education is sine-qua-non to economic growth and development. Depriving citizens from access to quality education can foster economic, social, political, and technological crises. Little wonder most African countries which have partially denied its citizen from access to quality education in terms of provision of all the needed infrastructural facilities have been languishing in the total collapse of their political, technological, economic and social system (systemic problems). This underscores the need for educational sustainability at all levels in Nigeria. Thus, for education to stand the test of time, it requires quality teachers who will invest their technical manpower for enhanced teaching and learning. In the words of Oliver (2001), most universities in Nigeria today are struggling with the issue of upskilling their staff to enable them to make efficient use of new technologies in their teaching. This will further enhance high-quality teachers with knowledge of information and communication technology that must be maintained to produce quality graduates.

Sustainability Education, often referred to as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), allows every individual to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. It inculcates human, social, economic and environmental which are called the pillars of education. Sustainable tertiary education is possible if quality assurance and development are given deserved attention. Without quality assurance and development, the sustainability of tertiary education in Nigeria will remain an elusive endeavor. There is a need to adopt technology-based teaching and learning as a means of improving quality and sustaining higher education in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, for tertiary education to experience sustainable development, there must be a linkage with the government's active participation in providing the necessary facilities for teachers to enable a holistic, participatory, all-inclusive cooperation and collaborative process with all stakeholders, employer of labour, students, parents associations and unions, lecturers and civil society for efficient and effective use of human and material resources as well as increase in funding. Most countries of the world that are striving for high academic excellence are those that embrace education for sustainable development (Idika, Offong and Uchegbue, 2010). Education for Sustainability (EFS) is an educational approach that aims to develop students, schools and communities with the values and the motivation to take action for sustainability in their personal lives, within their community and also at a global scale, now and in the future. We must not forget that the extent to which government can provide and fund sustainable education remains one of the key indices of good governance, progress and

development. This has been a major issue leading to the incessant strike actions by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria's university education.

Education for sustainability develops the knowledge, skills, values and world views necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living. It enables individuals and communities to reflect on ways of interpreting and engaging with the world. This underscores the need for lecturers' efforts at striving positively to enhance educational sustainability in academia. In an attempt to sustain education at the tertiary level (universities in particular), university teachers in Nigeria decided to form a union called the Academic Staff Union of Universities with the popular acronym, ASUU in 1978. For a long time, the picture of the system of education in Nigeria has been a matter of concern to many stakeholders particularly ASUU necessitating its attention to the dilapidated nature of the institutions and the facilities. In Nigeria, public primary and secondary schools are observably rated as having gone down in standard because of government neglect. These public schools are described as having collapsed and gone down the drain. This trauma has been pushed to the university system where the government has neglected its responsibility in ensuring quality education for its citizens. This has resulted in incessant strike actions by universities most noticeable is the academic staff union of Universities (ASUU) that came to prominence when it staged its first-ever strike under the Military Government of President Ibrahim Babangida on August 7, 1988.

ASUU strike has come to be seen by many particularly the agencies and functionaries of the government as an ongoing pandemic even though ASUU and all who are sympathetic with its course have continued to deny that view and see the role that ASUU plays as inevitable and without which the system of education in Nigeria would have shut down. It has been regarded as one of the strong pillars countering governments' persistent delay in educational policy formulation and implementation regarding educational matters. Its major aims and objectives are to ensure good governance in terms of funding university education. ASUU's patriotic call on the government to properly fund education to the level of providing sustained growth leading to development is often seen as a laudable effort. Unfortunately, successive governments have presented deaf ears to this cry; they seem too often to divert the fund into areas that appear to create more rather than solve the nation's problem and move it forward. For instance, the proposal and the move to open more public universities in the face of many existing and uncared-for public institutions may never be the obvious answer to end incessant strikes by the government's inability to agree on ASUU. With a total of 170 universities comprising 43 Federal, 48 states and 79 privates, and enrolments of 1,854,261(1,206,825 in Federal, 544,936 in State, 102,500 in Private; punchng.com), many polytechnics, colleges of educations, health technologies etc., it is evident that opening more public or private universities given the relatively small number being trained by the private, continuing dependence on public universities that themselves are helplessly relying on the government may hardly produce answers to the unending strike actions of ASUU or having education stand and be sustained in the face of ASUU strike especially if the option of funding is continuously being neglected.

Therefore, one of the primary concerns of ASUU is to ensure that the higher educational institutions are not reduced to the state of the primary and secondary education levels. Their

concern is to ensure that provisions are being made for the children of the less privileged to have access to similar quality educational opportunities and services as those enjoyed by the more privileged. In a situation where the poor is not open to any option of having to be provided with a qualitative and functional education system or continually face the challenge of seeing leaders who work hard to destroy the system for selfish reasons; ASUU and other citizens have come to see the situation of sending the rich abroad or to some private schools for studies, and even attempting to propose prescription of a legal organization like ASUU as being unfair and not being people friendly. This and many other unresolved issues have been the challenges of the trade union and government in Nigeria. Many have come to conclusively emphasize through the treatment being meted out to ASUU by the Federal Government over the years that without ASUU, the tertiary public education system would have long disappeared in Nigeria. ASUU believes that the government should provide a proper qualitative and sustainable education by properly funding education and providing good working conditions for academics and other educators.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ASUU IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

The Academic Staff Union of Universities often represented by the acronym ASUU is a noble union of academics that came to limelight in the early 1978. It is a trade union organization by academics in universities whose main aims have been to foster a cordial relationship between academic staff and their employers, to enhance the total participation of its members in the affairs of the university system and the nation, and to ensure the rights of workers to collective bargaining. Put in another way, the fundamental objective of ASUU is to have round-table negotiations with the Federal Government for adequate and enhanced welfare for teachers of tertiary institutions in the country. Incidentally, far more than in the 1980s and 1990s even up to 2010, many Nigerian scholars are commonly observed migrating to other countries such as the United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, the United States, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and other parts of the World with the skills and competencies already acquired through education for the development of their local environment. Part of the union's agitations is to reduce if not stop the brain drain. It is worth noting that apart from poor salaries and welfare packages, the poor state of the infrastructural facilities could promote brain drain in the country. One is moved to begin to think of what becomes of this country if this trend continues. Should the government also consider this, then it will empathically not permit the regular use of this weapon called strike which ASUU has found as its ultimate tool to express their grievances, protect the interest of workers and drive their demands home. It is deployed for many useful reasons such as for negotiation, procedural matters, settling probationary periods of service, disciplinary procedure, principles of redundancy, professional examinations, various unpaid claims, staff loans, pension and gratuity schemes, salaries and wages, leave, acting allowances, inconvenience allowance, out of station expenses, medical scheme, sickness benefit (Ohiwerei and Omo-Ojugo, 2018).

Odin et al, (2018) enumerated the causes of strikes to be; poor and inconsistent payment of salaries, poor conditions of service, political interference in education, poor funding of the education sector, non-compliance with agreements and policies, non-commitment, lack of empathy, and delay in payment of salaries and allowances. The strike has continued to be

associated with counter-productivity, as an action that facilitated 'products' that are ill-equipped in both Characters and in learning to be churned out from the school system to the society (Edinyang & Ubi, 2013). Even though ASUU has been found in the struggle for the emancipation of the Nigerian university system, looking at the trend of this fight, it is clear the Federal Government is yet to offer anything to ASUU; nothing has been done so far; and it does appear with so much of ASUU's expectation still not met, not even a promise is made in the last strike to settle ASUU; it will therefore, be important if ASUU can redirect its focus to their key role in the tertiary institution which is research and grows from there; develop their grant seeking and research delivery capacity; register NGOs and use that as a channel for their research activities rather than the university system to avoid interruption during the strike. This does not, however, downplay the role education can play in the hands of scholars as an instrument for achieving excellence.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Karl Marx's (1848) conflict theory

In the early 19th Century, a political philosopher named Karl Marx postulated the Conflict theory in his manifesto, 'The Communist Manifesto', which he published in 1848. The theory deals with the basics of human society in terms of conflict between those who own and those who control all the means of economic production called the bourgeoisie (government) and those who work under them known as the proletariat (labour of employees). Conflict theory informed the disagreement (struggle for power, authority, resources tussle and control of wealth and prestige) between the government and the workers. To the theorist, conflict is a necessity for peaceful coexistence. This implies that the theory shares the basic assumption that no group exists which does not possess conflicts of interest. And that conflict is necessary for growth and social change.

According to Nna (2004), Marx saw class struggle as the major determinant of the evolution of one form of society or the other. Marx posited that capitalism like the previous socio-economic system would inevitably produce internal tensions leading to its destruction.

From the above proposition, the social and political contradiction in society resulting from the unequal distribution of societal goods and services leads to the division of society into two antagonistic classes. To Marx, capitalism is the class of the rich who have assumed leadership positions in the state and gained power of control to manage societal wealth. They use their vantage positions to make policies to continuously dominate and exploit at the expense of the poor. The proletariat is the class of those who work and are directly involved in the production or whose resources are exploited. The latter class is constantly engaged in struggles for resources and change.

According to this theory, conflict arises when people feel deprived of what they perceive are their fair belongings, which produce a significant or far-reaching consequence on their performance and development. For instance, the people of Nigeria are quite endowed with many natural resources but teachers and other workers in the educational system are not paid enough to cater for themselves and their families. The governments who are in full control of the educational system, have often been looked at as not providing enough towards the

improvement of the system especially as majority are known to have developed the habit of involving their children in oversea schools all over the world. This act too, has been looked at as constituting poor governance and accountability as quite a huge sum of the country's resources meant to better the lives of our educational system are spent through this means. Some leaders too, have not seen the need to improve our education, social, and health sectors with the nation's abundant resources which has not in the best interest of the nation especially as a large number of the population resolves to migrate to other countries in search of greener pasture.

The implication of the theory to the present study is that Nigerian workers use strike action as an instrument of last resort in expressing their grievances over the government's insensitivity to their demands. Most especially for a government that is concerned with spending huge sums of money on procuring facilities for its parliament and other foreign countries at the expense of its decayed system. However, the theory may also inform the masses (workers) of the dangers attached to incessant strike actions in the country. Hence, the need to adopt other means of managing conflict in society.

Statement of the problem

The aims and objectives of university education in Nigeria are so designed to promote quality education with a high level of exceptionally skilled and talented human resources for enhanced economic, technological and capacity development. University education in Nigeria has been seen by many as failing in this task. This is because the educational system cannot boast of having achieved its goals and objectives due to its incessant striking actions. The persistent rise in academic strike actions has seriously affected the academic calendar thereby leaving the teachers and students to lump together academic activities of more than one or two sessions at the detriment of the individual learners who are expected to have access to quality education in the country. Also, the continuous strike actions have seriously affected academic staff research outputs in universities, having to share the limited time for research with many academic and other activities among other reasons. This is reflected in the dwindling research output of academics in Nigeria shown by the poor ranking of majority of universities in the country (Center for World University Ranking, 2023). If the best four ranked institutions in Nigeria, UI, UNN, UNILAG, and ABU in the global 2000 world list, according to Punch 15th May 2023, positioned as 1,163rd, 1,784th, 1,875th and 1,881st respectively globally, then, a lot needs to be done to raise the tertiary institutions from the trouble caused by incessant strike actions and government neglect of education in general. Moreso, despite the importance of research and research productivity, scholars (Bassey, Akuegwu, Udida & Udey, 2007) had earlier observed that the research productivity of academics in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, is abysmally low as evidenced by previous World ranking bodies, where universities in Nigeria recorded very low ranks. Such appraisal and ranking of universities in the world webometric ranking of HEIs, Times Higher Education (THE) ranking, among others, have been low (Center for World University Ranking, 2023). The 2020 webometric ranking of HEIs revealed that no Nigerian university was listed among the top 1,000 HEIs in the world; no university in South East Nigeria was listed among the top 1,500 HEIs in the world. Sequel to the issues pointed out above, the problem of this study is: How does incessant strike actions

influence the sustainability of tertiary education in Nigeria (2010-2020): Implications for research practices among academic staff.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to carry out an analysis of incessant strike actions on the sustainability of Higher education in Nigeria (2010-2020): Implications for research practices among academic staff. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the trend of strike action from 2010 to 2020.
2. Determine the extent to which lecturers carry out their research activities during strike actions.
3. To find out the perception of lecturers in their effectiveness in research practices during strike?
4. Find out the imminent dangers of ASUU's incessant strike on the educational sector?
5. Ascertain the possible ways of sustaining research and education in periods of strike action.
6. Ascertain the global research index of the academic staff of universities?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posed to guide the study.

1. What are the trends of strike action between 2010 and 2020?
2. To what extent are lecturers effectively carrying out their research activities during strike actions?
3. What is the perception of lecturers regarding their effectiveness in research practices during strike?
4. What are the imminent danger of ASUU's incessant strike on the educational sector?
5. What are the possible ways of sustaining research productivity in periods of strike action?
6. What is the global research index of the academic staff of universities?

EMPIRICAL REVIEW OF THE ASUU STRIKE AND ITS EFFECT ON SUSTAINABLE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

Oladipo (2012) stated that a strike would result in the academic calendar being compressed and parts of the curriculum being skipped. Some topics would not be treated and the students would have to write their examinations most times unprepared which has often resulted in poor performance and a decline in the quality of education in general. According to Amadi and Urho (2015), most academic activities for the school year are distorted once there is a strike action; it will give room to calendar adjustment which will inevitably affect the smooth running of the educational system. This may in turn affect students, teachers and university performance as many students would be under-taught, and many lecturers would not be able to cover lost grounds within the limited time. They are to rush over activities and the goal of the institution to produce graduates that will compete with the rest of the world might be defeated if this occurs repeatedly as we have experienced in the past years.

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The frequent strike actions delayed the graduation of a whole generation of students by three or even more years within the span of ten years. It is not unusual to find students that are supposed to graduate within a minimum of four years, staying in school for a period of six or seven years before graduating. This unfortunate situation has caused stagnation within the educational system, because within a period of about ten years (1992-2002), about three academic years were wasted due to strike (Jega, 2003). This means that the products of secondary schools had to keep waiting for space in higher institutions.

Over the years, the regularity of strike actions by ASUU has tended to bring a considerable loss of confidence and morale in our education. Strike actions are embarked upon to achieve certain demands. When the period extends longer than necessary, the morale of students may not be that high; frequent disruption of academic programmes, according to Iheanacho (2002), is a non-motivational factor to the students. Staying away from school for a long period gives the students opportunities to engage in non-academic and even unproductive behaviour. Likewise, this state of uncertainty makes the students psychologically and emotionally unstable, especially in the perception that it will cause them to stay in school longer than expected. This problem further constitutes a drawback in learning effectiveness. Some lecturers may find it difficult to carry out their research work freely because of low morale which is a function of the prolonged strike action. There is no doubt that workers may not find it easy to attend conferences, workshops, or seminars during these periods due to low morale which is resulting from the incessant strike Osuorji and David (2014), investigated the effect of incessant strikes on the academic performance of business education students in Abuja, Zaria. The study aimed to determine the extent to which strike actions have affected the academic performance of the students and to assess their perception of incessant strikes also on their academic performance. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and the result revealed that incessant strikes by lecturers have a resultant effect on the academic performance of the students of the business education programme in ABU, Zaria.

Similarly, Olaniyi and Aina (2014), worked on the incessant strikes and their effects on business education programme. The study adopted the expository dimension in its analysis, and a brief survey of what industrial action is, was done. It concluded that failure to resolve and find a lasting solution to the challenges posed by incessant strikes would amount to an evasion of the deeper roots of the problem in Nigerian education.

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. It adopted a descriptive research survey design. The finding shows that 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. The study's conclusion indicated that personnel policies have not been effective in preventing conflicts and strike behaviours because management is not sincere and committed to matters that concern the staff.

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Olupayimo (2014), used a survey methodological approach to examine the impact of incessant strikes on skills acquisition in business education. The aim was to select the strike action within a specified period to project its impact on the acquisition of business education skills programme. The study revealed that strikes had become the order of the day in Nigeria's educational system being the only language as thought by the striking union which their employer (the government) could understand. This was shown to have a great impact on business education which is essentially based on skill acquisition meant to be acquired by business education students over the years.

In another survey by Amadi and Urho (2015) on the effect of strike actions on the educational development management of universities in Rivers State, seventy-five (75) non-academic staff and sixty (60) academic staff were randomly selected from each population and totaling one hundred and thirty-five (135) independently sampled respondents as the sample for the study. The data collected was gathered using a structured questionnaire and oral interview and it was synthesized with the sample percentage (%) method. The data collected were analyzed and presented in tabular form. The results obtained showed irregularity of academic programmes. Other identified effects of strike actions found in the results included examination malpractices, cult activities amongst students, certificate racketeering, and erosion of dignity and respect of higher education. Measures recommended for eradicating strike actions in universities in Rivers State include stifling all aspects of collective bargaining, both employees and managers to allow third parties in negotiations, and both labour and management base subsequent negotiations on the rules and regulations binding labour matters. Also part of the recommendation was that agreements on salaries, fringe benefits and other working conditions between labour and management must ensure government respect as at when due.

TRENDS OF ASUU STRIKE IN NIGERIA FROM 1999-2022

Before the democratic republic (1999) in the era of President Olusegun Obasanjo and his vice, Atiku Abubakar, one of the major promises to the average Nigerian was a free and consistent education at levels in Nigeria. This promise was quite attractive to stakeholders in the academic environment. The average Nigerian wholeheartedly embraced the government with total confidence in restructuring the educational system for the better. However, not long after government assumed leadership, the expectations of the average teachers at all levels in the country became a thing of doom. It was quite noticeable that after a few months of Obasanjo's regime that the academic staff of universities embarked on a nationwide five months strike. Not quite long after, in 2001, ASUU embarked on a three months strike for the sake of averting the humiliation meted out by government to 49 lecturers at the University of Ilorin, and coupled with the then President, **Chief Olusegun Obasanjo** who labeled ASUU as "a bunch of lazy and ungrateful people." The strike was called off after three months.

Again, in 2002, the union was forced to embark on another industrial action on Sunday, December 29, 2002, after the Obasanjo administration failed to implement the agreement which was reached during the previous strike action. The strike lasted for only two weeks. In 2003, ASUU and Nigerian university undergraduates have again another six months of 'stay at home' which was due to the government's non-implementation of previous agreements

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covering poor university funding, disparity in salary and retirement age. In 2005, Nigerian university students again experienced another disruption in their academic calendar as university lecturers went on another industrial action, this time for a period of two weeks.

In April 2006, academic activities were paralyzed in all public universities across the country when ASUU declared a 3-day warning strike. It eventually lasted for one week. Another industrial action followed on March 26, 2007. The reason for the strike was on government's refusal to collective bargaining. The strike lasted for three months. In a bid to compel the government to consent to its previous negotiations such as an improved university salary structure and the reinstatement of the sacked 49 lecturers of the University of Ilorin, ASUU again went on strike for one week in 2008. In 2009, lecturers in public universities across the country embarked on an industrial action that lasted for four months. The strike which started in June was called off in October. Before the strike was called off, the Federal Government and the union had an agreement; included in the 2009 ASUU/FG agreement among others to adequately fund universities in the country and implement the 70-year retirement age limit. In 2010, schools were closed due to the Federal Government's failure to yield to the ASUU demands. On this note, ASUU embarked on another indefinite strike that lasted for over five months. The strike started on 22 July 2010 and was called off in January 2011.

In December, the same 2011, ASUU again put a total halt to academic activities nationwide. The strike lasted for 59 days and was called off in 2012. Again, the government's failure to consent to the 2009 agreement reached with ASUU (review of retirement age for professors from 65 to 70; approve funding to revitalize the university system; increase the budgetary allocations to education sector by 26%, among other demands) led to another industrial action. The strike was embarked upon on July 1, 2013, and called off on Tuesday, December 17, 2013. It lasted for five months, and 15 days. On August 17, 2017, ASUU again declared an indefinite strike over unresolved and contentious issues with the Federal Government. The strike was called off in September. 14. 2018.

In the same 2018, due to the Federal Government's failure to meet its demands, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) declared an indefinite nationwide strike. The union announced the strike on Sunday, November 4, 2018, after their National Executive Council meeting held at the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State. ASUU accused the government of failing to live up to its promises to fund universities' earned allowances among others. On this note, the Union embarked on a three-month nationwide strike on November 4, 2018. The strike was however, suspended on the 7th of February 2019 after a meeting between the ASUU leadership and a government delegation led by the Minister of Labour and Employment, Chris Ngige, who noted that the government had resolved the eight contentious issues that led to the strike. In 2020 the union initially embarked on a two-week warning strike in March 2020, over the failure of the Federal Government to implement its 2019 agreement and resolution with the union. The strike, however, lasted for over 9 months due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the unresponsiveness of the government to the academic body. It was eventually called off in December 2020, and that went into history as one of the longest strike actions ever.

So far in 2022, the union has been on strike for close to 8 months as of the time of this study, despite several interventions from pressure groups, and protests by students, the union and the

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government are yet to find common ground. This to Eyong (2023), has resulted in a high level of brain drain syndrome in academia which has caused an impediment to quality research output among university lecturers in Nigeria. See figure A depicts the magnitude of strikes in Nigerian universities.

Table 1: Magnitude of strikes in Nigeria universities from 1999-2022

Year	Month/Duration
1999	5
2001	3
2002	2week
2003	6
2005	2 weeks
2006	1 week
2009	4 months
2010	5 months
2011	59 days
2013	15 days
2017-2018	12 months
2020	9 months
2022	2 months

Sources: field study, 2022

FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE FOR THE PERSISTENT EMERGENCE OF STRIKES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES.

The failure of the Federal Government to implement the Memorandum of Action that was agreed upon with the union in 2009 led ASUU to embark on another indefinite strike that lasted for over five months. The strike started on 22 July, 2010 and was called off in January 2011. ASUU's action appeared to swiftly paralyze academic activities nationwide in December 2011, due majorly to the breach in the above agreement, and the failure of the Federal Government too, to adequately fund universities in the country and implement the 70-year retirement age limit for university teachers. The strike lasted for 59 days and was called off in 2012.

Again, the failure of the government to review the retirement age for professors from 65 to 70; approve funding to revitalize the university system; increase the budgetary allocations to the education sector by 26% among other demands led to another industrial action. The strike was embarked upon on July 1, 2013, and called off on Tuesday, December 17, 2013. It lasted for five months and 15 days. Students across various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are constantly being faced with the consequences of industrial action, either by the Academic or Non-Academic Staff Unions of various institutions.

Generally, strike actions are caused by disagreements between the government and the unions of various institutions, arising from the non or partial implementation of former agreements reached. The disagreement or lack of understanding between the government and the academic community often results in deadlocks that tend to disrupt the academic calendar. As the saying goes, when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers the consequence. The grass, in this case, refers to the students who bear the brunt of the disagreement. Incessant strikes dwindle

the academic performances of students. As learning gets suspended for a long period, the student's reading abilities would likely drop. Even the knowledge acquired during the active learning period may decay or be completely forgotten by some students due to disuse. This tends to turn some students into certificate seekers than knowledge seekers. Also, protracted strike actions can distort the school calendar and its activities completely. The after-effect is a prolonged school year that exceeds stipulated periods. This has often been seen as a major cause of producing unqualified graduates who are deficient in their fields of study. Further, strike action may likely prolong students' stay in school such that students who are supposed to do a four-year course may end up spending six years in the school for a very simple programme.

The concern is that such strike periods may be utilized by students for ventures that may not be productive to society. For instance, many students have observably been led into some social vices like prostitution, drug peddling, oil bunkering, arm robbery, among other ills. "An idle man," they say, "is the devil's workshop." A good number of premature marriages with their attendant challenges are being linked with increased premarital sex that may become incessant as a result of the inactivity of the students at the time of the strike. The issue of strikes among academic staff of universities in Nigeria is fast becoming a generational problem that appears to defile solutions. In some quarters, it is being seen as a continuing pandemic. It is in the light of this that the researchers resolved to investigate the sustainability of tertiary institutions in the face of the incessant strike actions and their implications for the research practices of academic staff in the south-south, of Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODS

This trend study adopted the descriptive survey design. The design became relevant in this study as the research's interest focused on exploring individuals' opinions about a subject matter. The population comprised 2931 academic staff from eight (8) universities (four federal and four state universities in Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta states in south-south, Nigeria). The study adopted a survey instrument titled: 'Causes and Possible Danger of ASUU Strike Questionnaire.' The questionnaire consisted of four (4) sections. Section A has eight (8) items that centered on factors hindering lecturers' effectiveness in research practices during ASUU strike; Section B comprised eleven (11) items on perceptions of lecturers regarding their effectiveness in research practices during the strike. Section C had eight (8) items on the imminent danger of ASUU's incessant strike on the educational sector, and section D had five (5) items on possible ways of sustaining research productivity in shock periods of strike. The instrument was administered by the researchers in different institutions particularly to ASUU staff members through their different chapters across the south-south zone. The instrument was face and construct validated by experts in different fields in the Faculty of Education and the Cronbach alpha reliability estimates of the different sub-scales ranged from .87 to .93 which implied that the instrument had a high face and construct validity. The data for the study were analysed using descriptive statistics (simple percentages and bar charts). Findings from the study showed that the trends of strike action from 2010-2020 are significantly negative on the academic standard of the states in south-south and Nigeria in general; to a large extent, lecturers effectively carry out their research activities during strike

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actions. Also, it was revealed that lecturers have a negative perception of their effectiveness in research practices during the strike and that ASUU strike poses some negative danger to the education of the country. Finally, irrespective of the danger, an imminent ASUU strike can be sustained while enhancing research productivity especially as Nigeria is not rated among the first 31st research countries based on the global research index. It was recommended among others that Academic scholars should collaborate with other scholars nationally and internationally on how to source alternative funding and sharpen their grant-seeking and research-delivering capacity to further sustain their research practices even in times of strike. This could help to reduce incessant strike actions in the country.

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

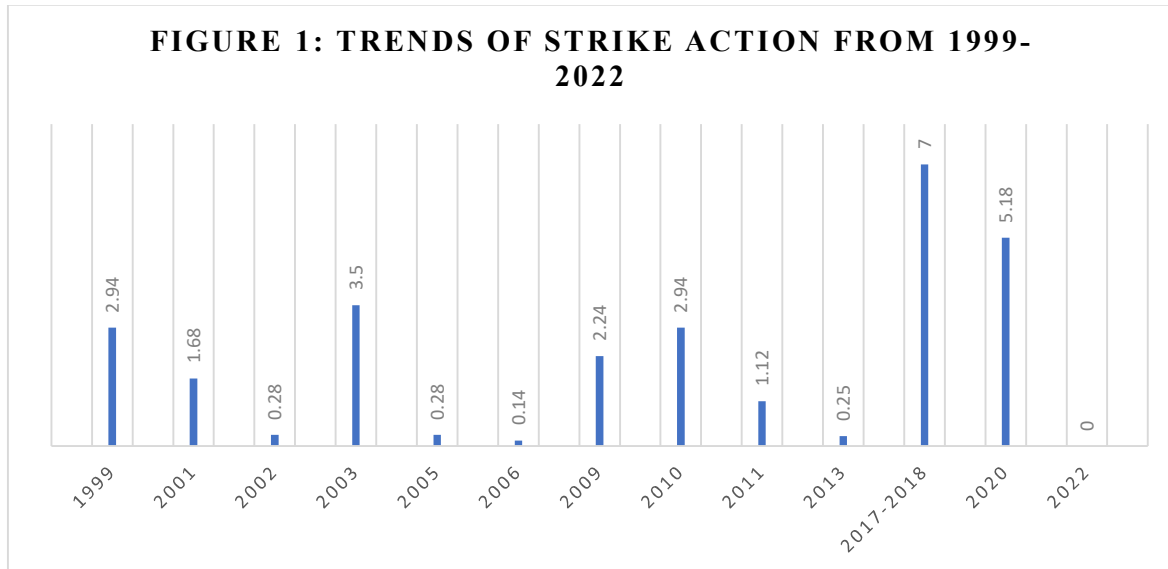
The study was a descriptive study resulting in the use of simple percentages and charts in answering all the research questions. This is presented as shown below:

Research question one: What are the trends of strike action from 2010-2020? In answering this research question, trend analysis was executed with the formula $\text{Trend Percentage} = \frac{(\text{Current Period Value} - \text{Base Period Value})}{\text{Base Period Value}} \times 100$. Current Period Value: This is the most recent data point in the series. Base Period Value: This is the first data point in the series.

Table 2: Trends of strike action from 1999-2022

Year	Month/Duration	Trend analysis
1999	21 weeks	2.94
2001	12 weeks	1.68
2002	2weeks	0.28
2003	25 weeks	3.5
2005	2 weeks	0.28
2006	1 week	0.14
2009	16 weeks	2.24
2010	21 weeks	2.94
2011	8 weeks	1.12
2013	2 weeks	0.25
2017-2018	50 weeks	7.00
2020	37 weeks	5.18
2022	14 weeks	-

Table 2 shows the trend analysis of the ASUU strike from 1999 to 2022. Using trend analysis (progress index) forecasts the trends in 1999 and dropped slightly in 2001; and from 2001 increased drastically in 2003; dropped in 2004 and 2005; increased in 2009 and 2010, and rose geometrically in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. This signifies that academic sessions in Nigeria have been unstable from the period of 1999 to 2022. This trend is presented in Figure1.



Research question 1: What are the factors hindering lecturers from effectively carrying out their research activities during strike actions? In determining the factors hindering lecturers from effectively carrying out their research activities during strike actions, descriptive statistics were employed (simple percentages and bar chart) and the results are presented in Table 2

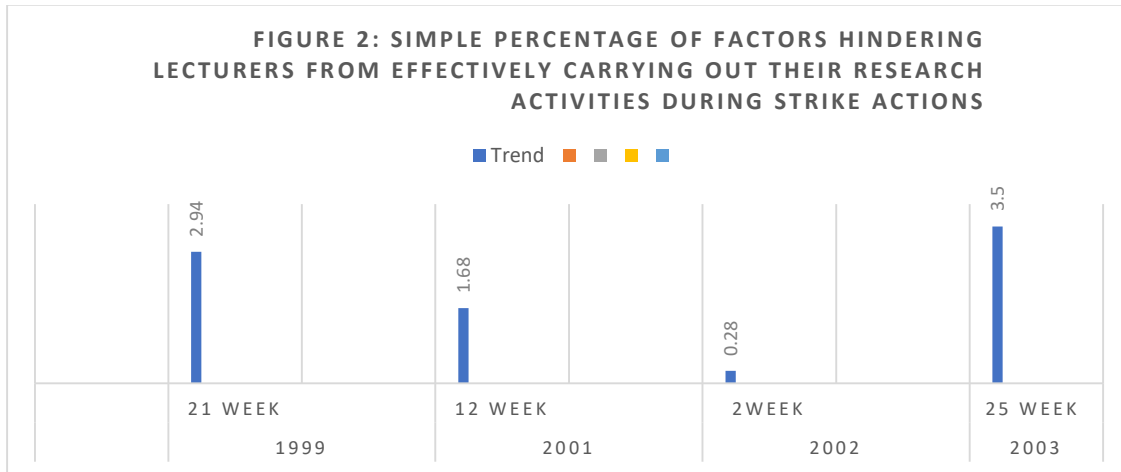
Table 3: Simple percentage of factors hindering lecturers from effectively carrying out their research activities during strike actions.

s/n	Items	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1	Lack of finance for buying data for browsing.	984	67.17	481	32.83	1,463
2	Inability to cater for a research publication fee.	1,100	75.09	365	24.91	1,465
3	Loss of interest due to a halt in promotion during strike.	1,205	82.25	260	17.75	1,465
4	The distraction caused by eagerness for other means of livelihood.	977	66.69	488	33.31	1,465
5	Dearth of research activities.	1,002	68.40	463	31.60	1,465
6	Starvation.	1,354	92.42	111	7.58	1,465
7	Family pressure.	1,341	91.54	124	8.46	1,465
8	Brain drain.	1,402	95.70	63	4.30	1,465

Sources: Field study 2022

Table 3 depicts the simple percentage of factors hindering lecturers from effectively carrying out their research activities during strike actions, from 1-8. Majority of the respondents agreed that strikes cause brain drain in the system 1, 402, (95.70%). This was followed by those who agreed that in strike periods, starvation is a major factor hindering lecturers from effectively carrying out research undertaking 1,354 (92.42%), and closely followed by family pressure 1341 (91.54%). In summary, all the items listed are factors hindering lecturers from effectively carrying out their research activities during strike actions. See the bar chart in Figure 2.

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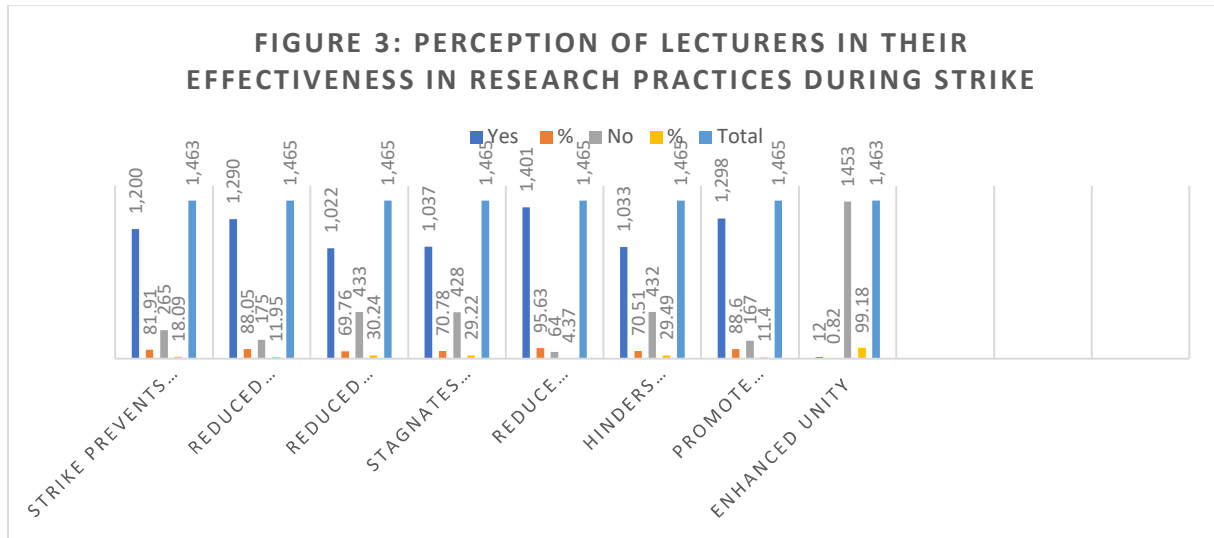
Research question 3: What are the perceptions of lecturers regarding their effectiveness in research practices during strike? To carry out the analysis, descriptive statistics were employed (simple percentages and bar chart). To determine whether lecturers are in the right frame of mind to conceive research practices effectively and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Perception of lecturers in their effectiveness in research practices during strike?

S/n	Items	Effective	%	Ineffective	%	Total
9	Problem identification	986	67.30	479	32.70	1,463
10	A clear statement of the problem	1,233	84.16	232	15.84	1,465
11	Formulating research questions and hypothesis	1,101	75.15	364	24.85	1,465
12	Literature review	997	68.05	468	31.95	1,465
13	Methodology	979	66.83	486	33.17	1,465
14	Data analysis	1,023	69.83	442	30.17	1,465
15	Data presentation	1,399	95.49	66	4.51	1,465
16	Summary	1,011	69.01	454	30.99	1,465
17	Conclusion	897	61.23	568	38.77	1,465
18	Recommendations	885	60.41	580	39.59	1,463
19	References	934	63.75	531	36.25	1,465

The results in Table 4 depict the Perception of lecturers on their effectiveness in research practices during the strike. A good number of lecturers admit that they lack thought in data presentation skills 1,399 (95.49%), some others agree that they are not able to coherently articulate a clear statement of the problem 1,233 (84.16%); yet others express inability in formulating research questions and hypotheses 1,101 (75.15%). Thus, during the strike, most lectures lack the skills in research practices. See the presentation in the bar chart in figure 3.

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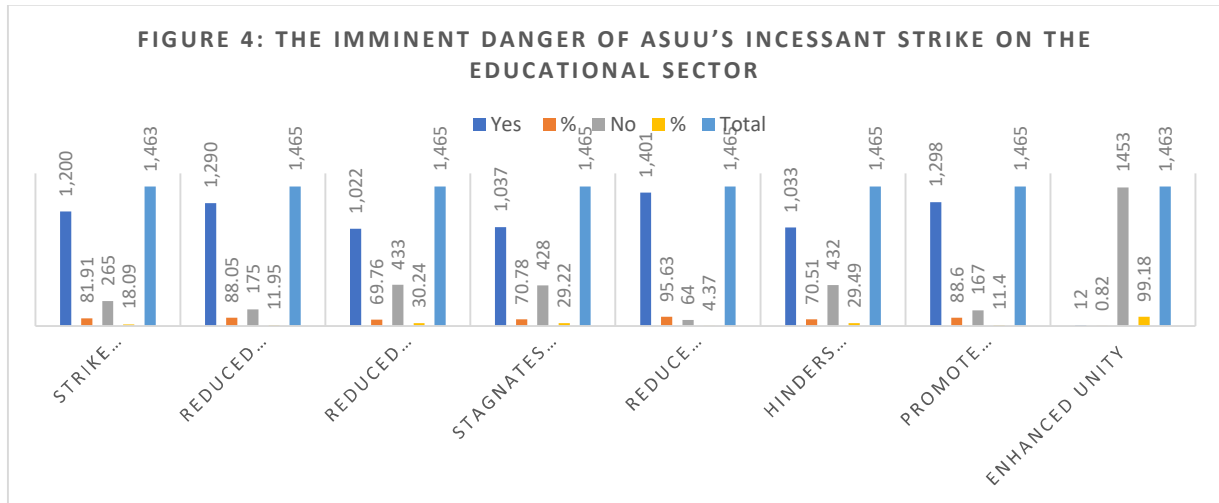
Research question 4: What are the imminent danger of ASUU’s incessant strike on the educational sector? To analyze the imminent danger of ASUU’s incessant strike on the educational sector, descriptive statistics were employed (simple percentages and bar chart) and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Imminent danger of ASUU’s incessant strike on the educational sector

s/n	Item	Yes	%	No	%	Total
20	Strikes prevent human resources that work at the university from being productive.	1,200	81.91	265	18.09	1,463
21	Reduce educational standards	1,290	88.05	175	11.95	1,465
22	Reduce research productivity	1,022	69.76	433	30.24	1,465
23	Stagnate lecturers’ growth	1,037	70.78	428	29.22	1,465
24	Reduce university ranking	1,401	95.63	64	4.37	1,465
25	Hinder growth and development.	1,033	70.51	432	29.49	1,465
26	Promote economic wastage	1,298	88.60	167	11.40	1,465
27	Enhance unity	12	0.82	1453	99.18	1,463

Table 5 of the descriptive statistics of the imminent danger of ASUU’s incessant strike on the educational sector. The response that indicates reduced university ranking dominated the responses, 1,401 (95.63%), followed by that of promotion of economic wastage 1,298 (88.60%). This was followed by the response agreeing to reduction in educational standards 1,290 (88.05%). This implies that persistent strike actions of ASUU can pose danger on the educational sector. The result is also presented in Figure 4.

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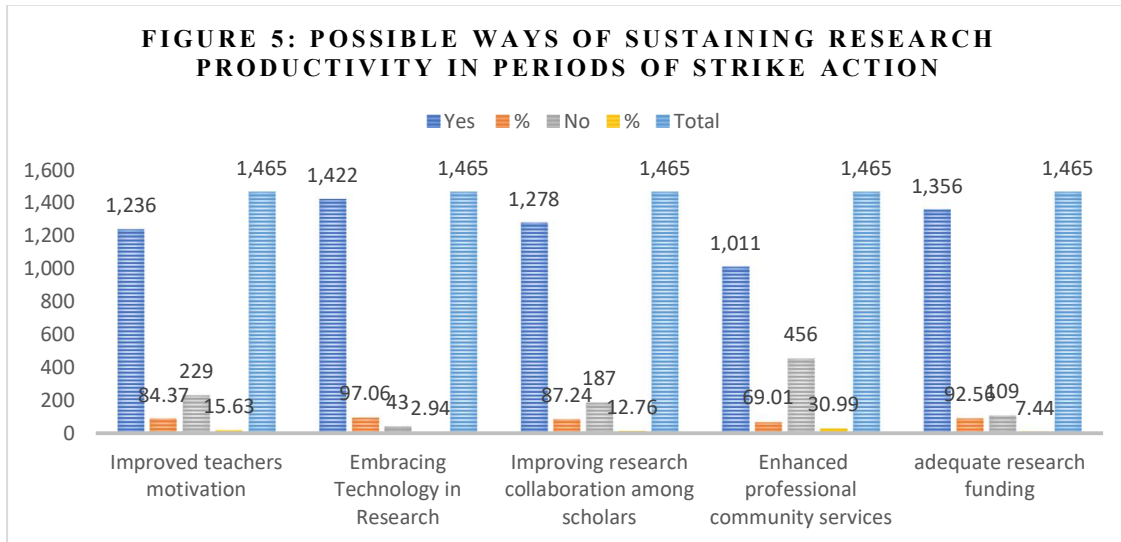
Research question 6: What are the possible ways of sustaining research productivity in periods of strikes? To analyze the possible ways of sustaining research productivity in periods of strike action, descriptive statistics were employed (simple percentages and bar chart) and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Possible ways of sustaining research productivity in periods of strike action.

s/n	Item	Yes	%	No	%	Total
28	Improved teachers' motivation	1,236	84.37	229	15.63	1,465
29	Embracing Technology in Research	1,422	97.06	43	2.94	1,465
30	Improving research collaboration among scholars	1,278	87.24	187	12.76	1,465
31	Enhancing professional community services	1,011	69.01	456	30.99	1,465
32	Adequate research funding	1,356	92.56	109	7.44	1,465

Table 6 shows the possible ways of sustaining research productivity in strike action. Embracing Technology in Research dominated the study responses, having 1,422 (97.06%), followed by Adequate research funding having 1,356 (92.56%). Thus, research productivity can be sustained irrespective of strike actions. On this note, the government should take proactive measures to enhance research productivity through the items listed in Table 5. See Figure 5 of the bar chart below.

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Research question 6: What is the global research index of the academic staff of universities? To analyze the global research index of the academic staff of universities, the global index (count and share) was employed as obtained in the nature index of the 2023 annual budget highlight and the results are presented in Table 7.

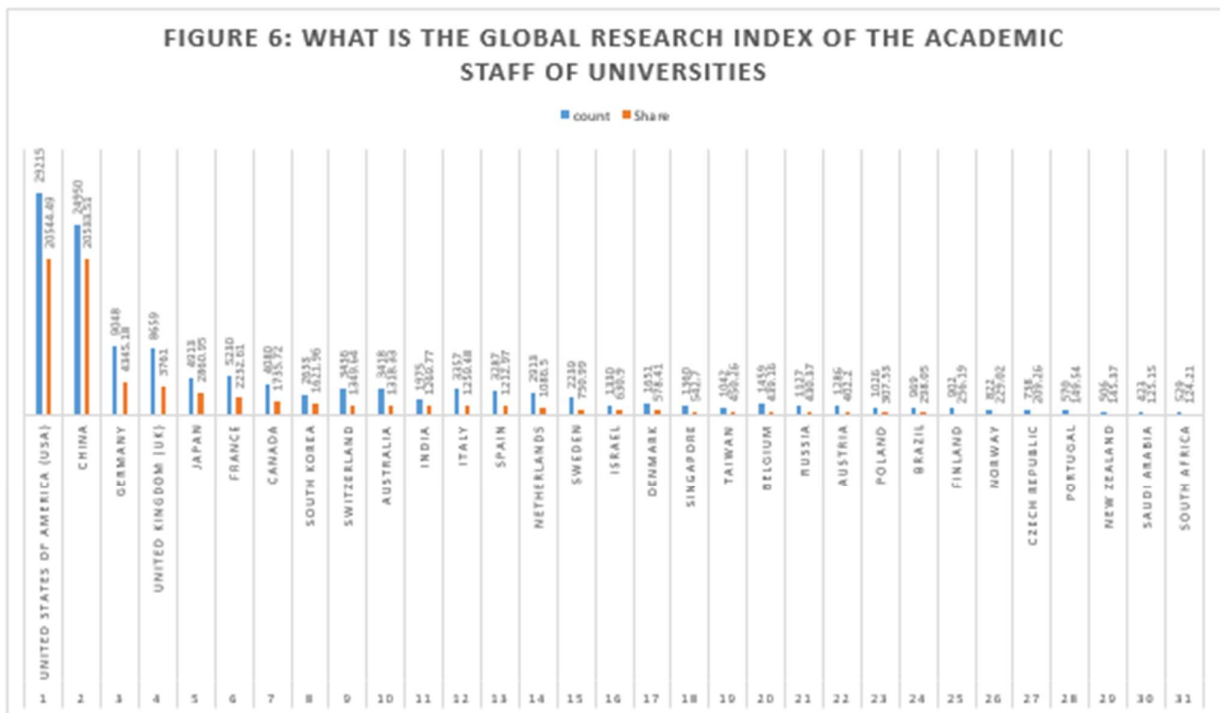
Table 7: Global research index of the academic staff of universities.

s/n	Country	Count	Share
1	United States of America (USA)	29215	20544.49
2	China	24950	20533.51
3	Germany	9048	4345.18
4	United Kingdom (UK)	8659	3761.00
5	Japan	4913	2860.95
6	France	5230	2232.61
7	Canada	4080	1735.72
8	South Korea	2633	1621.96
9	Switzerland	3436	1349.64
10	Australia	3418	1318.33
11	India	1975	1269.77
12	Italy	3357	1259.48
13	Spain	3287	1212.97
14	Netherlands	2913	1086.50
15	Sweden	2239	750.99
16	Israel	1330	630.90
17	Denmark	1651	578.41
18	Singapore	1360	542.70
19	Taiwan	1042	450.26
20	Belgium	1459	439.16
21	Russia	1127	430.37
22	Austria	1286	402.20

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23	Poland	1026	307.53
24	Brazil	969	298.05
25	Finland	902	256.19
26	Norway	822	229.02
27	Czech Republic	738	209.26
28	Portugal	570	149.54
29	New Zealand	506	145.37
30	Saudi Arabia	423	125.15
31	South Africa	529	124.21

Sources: retrieved: <https://www.nature.com/nature-index/country-outputs/generate/all/global>
 The nature index of 2023 annual budget highlights the most prolific institutions and countries in high quality research publishing for the year 2022. Unfortunately, the only African country, South-African is spotted in the 31st position in the relative ranking. See the bar chat in Figure 6.



DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are discussed below

In general, the study found that incessant strike actions of lecturers have negative impact on the educational sector. Lecturers are not effective in carrying out their research activities during the strike as shown in their research productivity as comparable with those of the advanced countries. The findings are in line with Olupayimo (2014), whose study revealed that strike has become the order of the day in Nigeria’s educational system as this is the only language that is understood by the employer (government), and this has a great impact on lecturers’ quest for academic excellence. These findings also corroborate the results of Amadi and Urho’s (2015) which show irregularity in academic programmes. Other commonly identified effects

found in the results include examination malpractices, cult activities amongst students, certificate racketeering, and erosion of dignity and respect of higher education, which were all the effects of strike actions.

It was found that incessant strike leads to a loss of confidence and morale thus, in the study of Iheanacho (2002), it was revealed that if strike is allowed to last longer, it assumes a non-motivational factor for the students and this could adversely affect their studies. For instance, staying away from school for a long period gives the students the opportunities to engage in non-academic and even unproductive behavior, and this could assume a negative impact on the development of the society.

Also, the findings revealed that there are imminent danger of ASUU's incessant strike actions on the educational sector. As Oladipo (2012) stated, strike actions that could result in the academic calendar being compressed and parts of the curriculum being skipped to the detriment of students' learning and the learning outcomes. This also agrees with Amadi and Urho (2015), who found that most academic activities for the school year are distorted once there is a strike action; it will give room for calendar adjustment that will inevitably affect the smooth running of the educational system. Majority of the outcomes of related subjects as reviewed in this study are in agreement of the danger which the strike actions of ASUU have caused the system of education, research endeavour of academic staff and the nation's progress, growth and development as a whole (Ayeni and Kolawole, 2014; Jega, 2003; Osuorji and David, 2014; Olayini and Aina, 2014; Ohiwerei and Omo-Ojugo, 2018; Edim et al., Edinyang and Ubi, 2013).

IMPLICATIONS OF INCESSANT STRIKE ACTIONS FOR RESEARCH PRACTICES OF ACADEMIC STAFF.

Research is a dominant activity of the academic staff. Their practices entail carefully coordinated and painstaking procedure aimed at finding solutions to identified problems. Such practices have been identified by Idika (2016) and Idika, Orji and Idika (2022) to include publications, conferences, workshops, seminars, symposia as well as training and re-training capacity building programmes aimed at equipping the academics with capacities to maintain a high level of research productivity in their various fields. It is essential to note that the incessant strikes embarked upon by ASUU can exert untold impact on the research practices among academic staff of tertiary institutions. The implication of the strike actions on the research activities of lecturers can be explained from the observation and reports of some authors and observers of the economy.

Firstly, Worugji (2022) observed that incessant strike actions has drastically affected the university system in terms of facility decay. Notably, during strikes, the available facilities are left to decay due to disuse. Often, such decay can have an overall effect on university teachers' research practice as the infrastructural facilities are major determinants of research productivity. This therefore calls for the need for continuing research and engagement of research infrastructure during the periods of strike to ensure that universities maintain same level of productivity at such shock periods. Taking this step too, will ensure that the limited infrastructure in the universities are not left unutilized.

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The practice of research by academics is not exclusive of the quality of research output. It has been established that the quality of research output hinged on the availability of quality infrastructural facilities and the innovation that goes with the usage (Idika et al., 2022). For instance, the availability and utilization of infrastructural facilities for teaching and research in the university system have a lasting impact on the extent of research delivery. The National Universities Commission (2006) reported that facilities in Nigerian universities are in poor shape. The available physical facilities are severely overstretched and ill-maintained. Hence, with this development, quality seems not to be guaranteed in the teaching and research of such universities.

The importance of the connection between research and teaching cannot be overemphasized. Inadequate research will no doubt hinder the process and outcome of teaching and learning. The lack of provision of facilities in schools observably hampers the intellectual and health of the students. Some schools in Nigeria generally, and Cross River in particular are not able to afford facilities that can be designated as a school clinic, and some students may likely not be able to use first aid box or exercise knowledge of a sickbay where it exists (Dan, Ukpata, Edet & Lale, 2021). This is backed up by the words of Okebukola as cited in Oyaziwo et al (2012) which informed that in most universities today, incessant strike actions have led to 15-30% of infrastructural decay coupled with non-functional infrastructure in Nigerian universities. This further has a profound impact on the level and quality of research outputs among academic staff in Nigeria.

Secondly, strike action has further deteriorated the budget for quality research delivery in Nigeria. The poor funding (Ekaette et al., 2019; Odigwe and Owan, 2019) by the Federal Government on research and other facilities has led to incessant strikes in universities in Nigeria and has caused the system decay in research output. In Nigeria, research undertakings are majorly centered on academic growth hence, most research activities in Nigeria are sponsored locally by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), few philanthropic organizations, like the MacArthur Foundation, also support scientists by sponsoring research and through endowment funds, foreign aid allocations, fellowships, and donations. This has reduced the academic staff quest for quality research delivery in Nigeria.

Finally, though differing views have continued to emerge from different schools of thoughts, some strong opinions are still being expressed in the direction that speak against the incessant strike actions. Conclusions are that a strong negative implication for the decline in academic ranking can be linked to persistent ASUU strike. The poor growing image of school and schooling could also be a function of the incessant strike actions and this has seriously affected the academic system thereby reducing the quality of research output. Eyong (2023) attributed the decline in research productivity to various constraints, including a lack of research funding (42.98%); brain drain (17.11%), and a lack of motivation (8.85%). In the e-government category, it is worth noting that in the research ranking, Nigeria ranks 95 out of the 110 countries that were included in the research, falling behind African countries like; South African, Senegal, Morocco, and Tanzania. The possible reason for this is that research is poorly funded; researchers devote too little time to research as a result of a poor organisational climate, and the research support system is weak in Nigeria. Others include inadequate proper research ethics, and poor research methodology as well as the poor educational system filtering into the

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research sub sector, and all culminated by incessant strike actions. This is in harmony with Idika and Ojini (2017) and Eyong (2023) who noted that it is an undeniable fact that quality research output in the university system is inevitable. To them, the entire activities surrounding the university system are majorly dependent on quality research output born out of good research ethics. Poor quality in research undertakings in most university institutions in Nigeria may be a result of limited academic staff with experience in carrying out research and more so, due to the incessant ASUU strikes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. Academic scholars should collaborate with other scholars nationally and internationally on how to source for alternative funding, for instance increase in grant-seeking and research-delivering capacity to stay afloat in times of strike. This will help to reduce persistent strike actions in the country.
2. The university system (academic and non-academic staff) should collaborate to check mate the excessive spending of resources by administrators and managers of TETFund .
3. Government should be willing to spend massively on education through effective utilization of its endowed natural resources and making education less expensive such as affordable prices in educational ventures, respectful educational culture, and emphasis on memorization through practice with particular reference being drawn from fast growing economies like Finland and China. For instance, China accepted the Soviet model and depended on its resources. China decided to substitute imports via domestic goods and form state-owned heavy industries from capital that was produced by agriculture.
4. Tertiary institutions across the country should take radical and compulsory steps to enforce research conferences, symposia, seminars, summits and workshops to train all academic staff including undergraduate and graduate students. This will serve as empowerment to them and also provides a platform where quality research output will be presented all round the year, strike or no strike.
5. Good governance: Government should create a platform for academic reform on how to sustain the educational sector, to transform it to global standards. Government can achieve more in this regard through the help of the Diaspora. This could help to tackle critical issues that lead conflicts and ultimately reduce incessant strike actions by ASUU in the country.

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