



## IMPACT OF ACADEMIC STAFF INDUSTRIAL ACTIONS ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN ANAMBRA STATE

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### Abstract

This study investigated the impact of academic strike actions on students' academic performance in Colleges of Education in Anambra State. Five research questions and five hypotheses guided the study. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The study population comprised 3241 students and 778 academic staff from two government-owned colleges of education in Anambra State namely: the Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze, and Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. The study sample comprised 294 students and 70 academic staff, drawn through proportionate sampling. A 25-item structured questionnaire developed by the researchers, titled "Impact of Academic Staff Strike on Students' Academic Performance" (IASSAP), with a reliability coefficient of 0.86, was used for data collection. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, and a t-test for independent samples to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that academic staff strike actions negatively affect students' study habits, knowledge acquisition, concentration levels, coverage of coursework and performance in examinations in colleges of education in Anambra State. Also, there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of students and academic staff on the impacts of academic staff strike actions on students' academic performance in colleges of education in Anambra State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among other that: government should consider it a necessary obligation in ensuring that the wages and salaries of the union members (lecturers) are paid when due and during strike, academic staff should ensure that all the purposes for which they embarked on strike are met before thinking of calling off the strike to help reduce the frequency of strike occurring and re-occurring.



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**Keywords:** Colleges of Education, Academic Staff, Industrial Actions, Students, Academic Performance

## 1.1 Introduction

Quality education in Nigeria has been recognized as a veritable tool for national development. Education enhances opportunities for sustainable development and plays a crucial role in the overall development of individuals, society and the nation at large. Education is the most important avenue for improving the quality of life of an individual and his/her adaptation to society. Consequently, the Federal Government deemed the education of Nigerian citizens to be of utmost importance as a veritable tool for ensuring sustainable economic growth and development (FGN, 2014). As a crux, one may be right to state that without a concretely laid down educational foundation, it would be impossible to effect a purposeful development orientation in the citizenry.

It is on the recognition of this important aspect of national development that, since the end of colonialism in Nigeria, successive governments have devised educational programmes, including tertiary education, with the aim of laying the foundations for other fields of national development. Thus, from the early 1960s onward, apart from establishing teachers' training colleges, the government went a step further by establishing higher-level teacher-training institutions, now known as 'Colleges of Education'. These institutions have taken on the challenge of training teachers for primary and secondary schools.

The primary aim of enrolling in any academic programme at the tertiary level of education and in colleges of education in particular, is for the acquisition of knowledge and skills that will enhance the individual's fulfilment of his/her potentials, adjustment skills and contribution to the development of society. Supporting the above statement, Ahmed, Umrani, Pahi and Shah (2017) asserted that one of the primary reasons for enrolling in any academic programme is to acquire advanced knowledge and skills that will help prepare students to fit into the global trend in which education is an essential development index. Tertiary education programmes expose students to rigorous academic tasks which require an utmost commitment to achieve desired academic results. To get students committed to their academic activities, teachers assign academic tasks to help them explore ideas and knowledge, which are intended to prepare them for academic success (Anerobi and Unachukwu, 2020). The knowledge and skills acquired by students on graduation helps them to become contributing and functional members of the society.

Notwithstanding the importance of colleges of education to developing quality teachers and national development, regular occurrences, including unpaid lecturers' salaries, poor funding, degeneration of educational facilities and infrastructure at all levels and particularly, strike actions, impact negatively on the output of these colleges, including students' academic performance (Abanobi, Abanobi, Ibe & Airiavbere, 2022). Consequently, tertiary education in Nigeria has suffered a tremendous setback as a result of strikes by the College of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU). This trend has always subjected students to pitiable conditions, disrupting academic programmes, giving students undeserved extensions in their study years, affecting students' concentration, leading to poor performance in academic programmes, fostering poor study habits, and undermining lecturer-student relationships, amongst others. Consequently,

students' academic performance has become comparatively low, while various forms of examination malpractice are on the increase (Ebi, 2017).

In view of the preceding, Awhejeada and Umerionwari (2020) stated that strike means the process by which employees exert pressure on their employers to accede to their demands. Adavbiele (2015) also noted that strike actions over time have been used by union leaders to register their grievances concerning pay and conditions. Adavbiele further observed that strike actions have been a recurring phenomenon in Nigeria's education sector and, as such, have led to several grievous consequences for programme offerings in the nation. In addition, Melisa (2021) asserted that strike action is a work stoppage resulting from employees' mass refusal to work due to certain grievances, stressing that it is the most significant aspect of industrial conflict.

In Colleges of Education in Anambra State, where this research was carried out, the academic staff, from time to time, embark on strike action to press their demands, and this, to a great extent, has a tremendous negative influence on students' academic performance. Dakuku (2020) observed that strikes had become a familiar and disturbing refrain in the Nigerian polity and have probably become the greatest threat to Nigerian tertiary education. It has reduced the quality of education, academic performance and crippled the entire education system (Chukwudi & Idowu, 2021).

Academic staff strikes in colleges of education in Anambra State are implicated in unmet lecturers' needs, ranging from psychological, physiological, social, emotional, and intellectual needs. Naturally, when an individual's need is unmet, anxiety, stress and frustration set in. This is exactly the situation: the academic staff in colleges of education find themselves, from time to time, and this behavioural defence mechanism, in the form of a strike resulting in the indefinite closure of the institutions, is often witnessed, thus bringing all academic activities to a halt. When the academic staff in colleges of education in Anambra State and their employers lack adequate conflict management and resolution skills, great distress can arise, leading to a strike. Okeke, Anierobi and Ezennaka (2021) noted that the government's nonchalant attitude and lack of commitment to the welfare of academic staff are contrary to the remarkable objectives of tertiary education as stipulated in the Federal Government of Nigeria's National Policy on Education. Wahab (2018) noted that close observation of academic staff strikes implicates factors such as the erosion of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, poor remuneration and conditions of service, underfunding of institutions and poor physical working conditions, among others.

The rate of strike actions by academic staff in Colleges of Education in Anambra State is alarming and worrisome, and it demands urgent attention from all stakeholders in education to rescue the students' destinies. Neglect of this very important issue may result in social, behavioural, economic and psychological problems for the students. Society at large, particularly on students' academic performance.

Various authors and researchers have attempted to explain the reasons for strikes in Nigeria. For instance, Okeke, Anierobi and Ezennaka (2021) attributed causes of strike action to include denial of academic staff rights and entitlements ranging from non-payment of salary,

promotion arrears and academic earned allowances, government dishonesty, rascality, irresponsibility of government, violation of agreement, low priority for education system and insensitivity to other people's needs by the government. Adavbiele (2015) observed that poor application of collective bargaining as well as violations of legislation or rules have been a notable cause of strike actions in Nigeria. Consequently, when the government breaches a contractual agreement, strike action among academic staff of colleges of education may be triggered, interrupting academic activities and exerting a tremendous negative impact on students' academic performance.

Academic performance of students is one of the vital elements that drive the entire education system. According to Mary (2021), academic performance is the expression of the knowledge acquired and skills developed during a course of study. Stainmayr, Meibner, Weidiger and Wirhwein (2017) noted that academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher, or institution has accomplished their short- or long-term educational objectives. Anierobi, Okeke and Etodike (2021) observed that the evidence of proper teaching and adequate learning should manifest in students' academic performance. They viewed academic performance as the hub around which teaching and learning revolve and, therefore, as the target for every student enrolled in any academic programme. Moore (2019) observed that students' academic performance is considered the most important outcome of formal educational experiences and an indicator of students' well-being and psychological development.

In the context of this study, the researchers view academic performance as the extent to which the students are able to apply and display the knowledge and skills acquired in a course programme. This permeates how it affects their short-term educational objectives (i.e., end-of-semester examination, completion of a course programme) as well as their long-term educational objectives (i.e., performance in a job/career at graduation, further studies, and all academic and intellectual-related activities).

The researchers wish to point out that academic staff strike actions may affect both short-term and long-term educational objectives. For instance, it may lead to lecturers not completing their lectures, poor concentration by students, course programmes/contents remain unfinished, students developing poor study habit and inability to retain what was taught before the strike action, semester examination being cut short, and students' duration of course programme completion being extended. In their study, Nwanyanwu, Nkoro, Nwankwo and Igbara (2023) found that incessant strike actions by academic staff of universities have led to poor course coverage, extension of students' years of study, and poor student retention. These strikes, according to the authors, have led many students to develop poor study habits and lose interest in their studies. Similarly, Abanobi, Abanobi, Ibe and Airiavbere (2022) reported that the academic staff union's incessant strike actions have led many students to lose interest in schooling and develop poor study habits, which affect their academic grades in examinations.

Furthermore, Mohammed and Hammangabdo (2022) corroborated the findings of previous authors, reporting that industrial actions by universities disrupt the academic calendar and undermine the quality of teaching and learning, as well as the overall academic performance, with

implications for the social, economic, and psychological stability of students. Given the abundant evidence on the implications of academic staff strikes for students' academic performance and behaviour in universities, yet no research on students in colleges of education, the researcher is resolved to empirically determine the specific impacts of academic staff industrial action on students' academic performance in colleges of education in Anambra State.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the impacts of academic staff strike action on students' study habits in colleges of education in Anambra State?
2. What are the impacts of academic staff strike action on students' acquisition of knowledge in colleges of education in Anambra State?
3. What are the impacts of academic staff strike action on students' concentration in colleges of education in Anambra State?

## 2. Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The design was deemed appropriate because the researcher collected information from a sample of academic staff and students of colleges of education to ascertain the implications of academic staff strike actions on the students' academic performance in colleges of education in Anambra State. The population for this study was seven hundred and seventy-eight (778) academic staff and three thousand two hundred and forty-one (3,241) students in the two government-owned colleges of education in Anambra State. The sample of the study comprised six hundred and twenty-four (624) academic staff and students of the two colleges of education. That is, 268 academic staff and 356 students. A 25-item structured questionnaire developed by the researchers titled "Impact of Academic Staff Strike on Students' Academic Performance" (IASSAP), with a reliability coefficient of 0.86, was used for the study. At the end of instrument administration, 317 copies were returned valid (i.e., 248 student copies and 69 academic staff copies), resulting in a 87% return rate, which was used for data analysis. The data collected in the field were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while a t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 alpha level. A criterion mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) score of 2.50 was set as a benchmark to either accept or reject an item as the impact of strike action on students' academic performance. In the same vein, a mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) score below 2.50 was adjudged the contrary. Specifically, items with mean scores ranging from 0 – 1.49 were adjudged (SD – strongly disagree), 1.5 – 2.49 (D - disagree), 2.5 – 3.49 (A - agree) and 3.5 – 4.0 (SA – strongly agree).

### 3. Results

**Table 1:** Mean Responses of the Respondents on the Impacts of Academic Staff Strike Action on Students' Study Habit in Colleges of Education in Anambra State

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Strike actions by academic staff demotivates students from self-studying	317	3.50	0.50	SA
2	It affects students' mental strength to learn due to prolong out-stay from school	317	3.30	0.47	A
3	Academic staff strike induces students to ignore academic activities while at home	317	3.43	0.49	A
4	Strike actions limit students access to learning facilities like the library and laboratory	317	3.41	0.51	A
5	Strike denies students opportunity to engage in tutorials that enhances their learning effectiveness	317	3.41	0.49	A
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>317</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>0.49</b>	<b>A</b>

Result in table 1 showed that the respondents agreed that all the items are the impacts of academic staff strike action on students' study habits in colleges of education in Anambra State with students being demotivated from self-studying (mean = 3.50), ranking highest amongst other impacts.

**Table 2:** Mean Responses of the Respondents the Impacts of Academic Staff Strike Action on Students' Acquisition of Knowledge in Colleges of Education in Anambra State

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
6	Strike denies students opportunity to interact with their lecturers on regular basis to sharpen their knowledge	317	3.44	0.50	A
7	Students disengage from academic activities while at home thereby limiting their level of knowledge acquisition	317	3.52	0.50	SA
8	Strike actions by academic staff exposes students to unverified information in the media especially social media	317	3.33	0.48	A
9	Students find it difficult to assimilate after returning from strike break	317	3.47	0.49	A
10	Rush-effect to cover the syllabus affects students' understanding of contents thus encouraging rote learning.	317	3.42	0.51	A
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>317</b>	<b>3.44</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>A</b>

Result in table 2 showed that the respondents agreed that all the items are the impacts of academic staff strike action on students' acquisition of knowledge in colleges of education in Anambra State with students being disengaged from academic activities while at home thereby limiting their level of knowledge acquisition (mean = 3.52), ranking highest amongst other impacts.

**Table 3:** Mean Responses of the Respondents the Impacts of Academic Staff Strike Action on Students' Concentration in Colleges of Education in Anambra State

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Most students engage in other non-learning activities during strike actions which consumes their study time	317	3.45	0.50	A
12	Prolonged strike actions demotivate students from indulging in academic activities outside the school setting	317	3.46	0.50	A
13	Excessive engagement in social activities while at home derails students' level of concentration to their studies	317	3.05	0.48	A

14	Strike actions by academic staff encourages brain drain on the part of the students thereby decreasing their concentration level	317	3.09	0.49	A
15	In an effort to fend for their personal needs, some students lose track of individual learning	317	3.08	0.51	A
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>317</b>	<b>3.23</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>A</b>

Result in table 3 showed that the respondents agreed that all the items are the impacts of academic staff strike action on students' concentration in colleges of education in Anambra State with students being demotivated from indulging in academic activities outside the school setting (mean = 3.46), ranking highest amongst other impacts.

### Hypothesis 1

**Table 4:** t-test Summary of the Mean Differences of Academic Staff and Students' Response on the Impact of Strike Actions on Students' Study Habit in Colleges of Education in Anambra State

Items	Status	N	Mean	SD	t.cal.	df	P-Value	Decision
1	Students	248	3.54	0.49	2.417	315	0.160	Not Significant
	Staff	69	3.38	0.48				
2	Students	248	3.33	0.48	1.724	315	0.860	Not Significant
	Staff	69	3.22	0.42				
3	Students	248	3.46	0.49	1.819	315	0.700	Not Significant
	Staff	69	3.33	0.47				
4	Students	248	3.40	0.49	1.458	315	0.647	Not Significant
	Staff	69	3.43	0.56				
5	Students	248	3.43	0.49	1.188	315	0.236	Not Significant
	Staff	69	3.35	0.48				

Outcome of analysis on table 4 revealed that across the across the 5 items, the P-Value is greater than the alpha value of 0.05; implying that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of academic staff and students on the impact of strike actions on students' study habit in colleges of education in Anambra State. This means that both lecturers and students consented that academic staff strike actions impacts negatively on students' study habit.

### Hypothesis 2

**Table 5:** T-test Summary of the Mean Differences of Academic Staff and Students Response on the Impact of Strike Actions on students' acquisition of knowledge in colleges of education in Anambra State

Items	Status	N	Mean	SD	t.cal.	Df	P.Value	Decision
6	Students	248	3.46	0.51	1.365	315	0.173	Not Significant
	Staff	69	3.36	0.48				
7	Students	248	3.56	0.49	2.724	315	0.117	Not Significant
	Staff	69	3.38	0.48				
8	Students	248	3.36	0.49				

	Staff	69	3.22	0.42	2.251	315	0.250	Not Significant
9	Students	248	3.50	0.50				
	Staff	69	3.33	0.47	2.531	315	0.120	Not Significant
10	Students	248	3.42	0.49				
	Staff	69	3.43	0.56	1.282	315	0.778	Not Significant

Result of analysis on table 8 indicates that across the 5 items, the P-Value is greater than the alpha value of 0.05; implying that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of academic staff and students on the impact of strike actions on students' acquisition of knowledge in colleges of education in Anambra State. This means that both lecturers and students agreed academic staff strike actions exerts negative impact on students' acquisition of knowledge.

### Hypothesis 3

**Table 6:** t-test summary of the mean differences of academic staff and students' response on the impact of strike actions on students' concentration in colleges of education in Anambra State

Items	Status	N	Mean	SD	t.cal.	df	t.Sig.	Decision
11	Students	248	3.48	0.50				
	Staff	69	3.35	0.48	2.014	315	0.450	Not Significant
12	Students	248	3.48	0.51				
	Staff	69	3.42	0.50	1.806	315	0.421	Not Significant
13	Students	248	3.19	0.46				
	Staff	69	3.23	0.43	8.625	315	0.210	Not Significant
14	Students	248	3.06	0.24				
	Staff	69	3.23	0.43	4.351	315	0.350	Not Significant
15	Students	248	3.09	0.29				
	Staff	69	3.07	0.26	1.524	315	0.601	Not Significant

Outcome of analysis on table 6 revealed that across the 5 items, the P-Value is greater than the alpha value of 0.05; implying that there was significant difference in the mean responses of academic staff and students on the impact of strike actions on students' concentration in colleges of education in Anambra State. This indicative that both lecturers and students agreed that academic staff strike actions has significant negative impact students' concentration level.

### 4. Discussions

Analysis of data revealed that incessant strike actions by academic staff of colleges of education in Anambra state negatively impact students' study habits. For instance, it was consented to by the respondents that strike actions by academic staff demotivates students from self-studying, affects the students' mental strength to learn due to prolonged out-stay from school, induces students to ignore academic activities while at home, limits students access to learning facilities like the library and laboratory as well as denies students opportunities to engage in tutorials that enhances their learning effectiveness. Nevertheless, no significant difference was recorded in the

mean ratings of students and academic staff on the impact of strike on the students' study habits in colleges of education in Anambra State. This implies that the degree to which students and academic staff agree on the items illustrating the impacts of academic strike actions on students' study habit did not differ because both consented to the impacts it has on the students' study habit based on their collective mean responses. The finding aligns with that of Nwanyanwu, Nkoro, Nwankwo and Igbara (2023), who examined the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strikes on students' behavior at the University of Port Harcourt and reported that ASUU strikes have a significant negative impact on students' behavior. The negative impact on students' behaviour justifies the development of poor study habits among students at home. Furthermore, this finding agrees with that of Abanobi, Abanobi, Ibe and Airavbere (2022) who investigated the perceived impact of industrial actions on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria and found that poor study habits among students to a great extent are the impact of industrial actions of various unions on the academic performance of students in Nigeria tertiary institutions. By implication, this shows that incessant strike actions by academic staff of tertiary institutions hinder students' morale to study and thus result in poor academic performance.

The study's findings revealed that strike actions by academic staff negatively affect students' knowledge acquisition in colleges of education in Anambra State. In specifics, it was recorded that strike actions by academic staff of colleges of education deny students the opportunity to interact with their lecturers on a regular basis to sharpen their knowledge, disengage students from academic activities while at home, thereby limiting their level of knowledge acquisition, as well as exposing students to unverified information in the media, especially social media. In addition, the findings indicated that strike actions by academic staff of colleges of education in Anambra State make it difficult for students to assimilate what is taught after returning from strike, and the rush to cover the syllabus affects students' understanding of the contents, thus encouraging rote learning. Notwithstanding the respondents' agreement on the impacts of academic strike actions on students' knowledge acquisition, a significant difference in the mean ratings of students and academic staff regarding these impacts was observed. The finding is in tandem with that of Nwagbala, Okafor and Ani (2023), who examined the effect of ASUU strike on students' academic performance in selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria and found that strike actions by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) have a high negative impact on the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions. Similarly, the finding agrees with that of Mohammed and Hammangabdo (2022), who investigated how industrial action impacts academic performance at Taraba State University and found that industrial actions by the University disrupted the academic calendar and undermined the quality of teaching, learning, and general level of academic performance, with implications for the social, economic, and psychological stability of the students. This implies that students are bound to record poor academic performance when they do not acquire the necessary knowledge due to the strike.

Furthermore, data analysis showed that strike actions by academic staff of colleges of education in Anambra State negatively affect students' concentration levels. For instance, it was contained in the findings that most students engage in other non-learning activities during strikes

which consumes their study time, and demotivates students from indulging in academic activities outside the school setting. Additionally, it was recorded that strike actions by academic staff of colleges of education push students to engage excessively in social activities while at home, resulting in a derailment in their level of concentration, which encourages brain drain of students, thereby decreasing their concentration level and some students lose track of individual learning in an effort to fend for their personal needs. Notwithstanding the respondents' agreement with the findings, a significant difference in the mean ratings of academic staff and students was observed. The finding aligns with that of Gbaa (2022), who assessed the effects of strike action on students' academic performance at Benue State University, Makurdi and reported that ASUU strike actions influence students' CGPA and overall academic performance. Similarly, the finding is in consonance with that of Monogbe and Monogbe (2019), who examined the ASUU Strike and Nigerian Tertiary Educational System and reported that the quality of education and student performance are negatively influenced by incessant ASUU strikes.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In line with the study's findings, the researchers concluded that academic staff strike action affects students' study habits, knowledge acquisition, and concentration while away from school. This shows that strike actions by academic staff have a significant negative impact on students' academic development and should be averted by all means. This assertion is supported by the responses of both academic staff and students of colleges of education in Anambra State, which show no significant difference in their opinions.

#### **5. Recommendations**

In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government should pay close attention to the demands of academic staff in colleges of education across Nigeria to prevent strike actions that could negatively affect students' study habits.
2. There is a need for all key stakeholders in the education sector to engage and agree on conditions of service to ensure the continuity of learning and avoid industrial action, thereby improving students' consistent acquisition of knowledge.
3. On resumption of academic activities after strike actions, school management should give lecturers and staff the needed time to interact and ensure that the curriculum is covered before examinations in order to allow students' quality time to concentrate and study.

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