

Labour Conflict and Management of Federal Universities in Nigeria: A Study of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)

¹Stella Osuagwu

Email: holyghostironlady@gmail.com

² Emma Chukwuemeka

Orcid Id. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7871-9475>

Email: ee.chukwuemeka@unizik.edu.ng

^{1,2} Department of Public Administration

Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria.

<p><i>Abstract</i></p> <p><i>Labor conflicts in Nigerian public universities have been a recurring challenge, often resulting in disruptions to academic activities and impacting the quality of higher education. This study therefore examines Labour Conflict and Management in Nigerian Public Universities with focus on academic staff union of the university (ASUU). The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Data were elicited from respondents using questionnaire, in-depth interview, focus group discussion. Data from secondary sources complemented the primary data. Statistical tables were used to present and analyze the data. Findings revealed among others that there is significant relationship between ASUU's demands and the recurrence of labor conflicts, The persistent labor conflicts have a significant negative impact on various aspects of educational quality, including academic calendars, student progress, and institutional prestige. The findings were supported by appropriate recommendations that were derived from the findings.</i></p>	<p><i>Journal of Policy and Development Studies (JPDS)</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Vol. 16. Issue 1 (2024)</i> <i>ISSN(p) 1597-9385</i> <i>ISSN (e) 2814-1091</i> <i>Home page</i> <i>https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jpds</i></p> <p>ARTICLE INFO:</p> <p>Keyword: <i>Labour union, grievance, collective agreement</i></p> <p>Article History</p> <p>Received: <i>7th July 2024</i></p> <p>Accepted: <i>4th September 2024</i></p> <p>DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jpds.v16i1.18</p>
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1. Introduction

In Nigeria, strikes are a primary method for resolving conflicts between employees and employers. According to Chand (2016), a strike is a spontaneous and concerted withdrawal of labor from production. Chijioke (2013) further defines a strike as an organized work stoppage by workers to enforce compliance with demands made on employers. Strikes often result from unresolved conflicts between employees and employers, particularly within Nigeria's tertiary education sector, which has gained a reputation for frequent labor disputes.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been at the forefront of labor conflicts in Nigerian public universities. ASUU strikes have significantly damaged the image of higher education in Nigeria, causing many parents, students, and stakeholders to turn to foreign education despite the social and economic implications. These strikes have become so frequent that opinions are divided on the responsibility for the persistent crises—some blame the government for its negligence and lack of commitment to the education sector, while others point to ASUU's radicalism and confrontational approach.

There are two types of labor conflicts commonly seen in Nigerian universities: internal and national. Internal labor conflicts are specific to individual universities and stem from factors unique to each institution. National labor conflicts, however, involve public universities across the country and often arise from disputes between ASUU and the state or federal government. These conflicts can lead to either total or partial strikes, with varying durations and intensity (Ige, 2014; Anonaba, 2015).

Ogbette, Eke, and Ori (2017) emphasize that the labor conflict between ASUU and the government reflects elements of class conflict, driven by both economic and political factors. Historical, economic, and political dynamics within the Nigerian system have institutionalized the conflict, making it difficult to resolve. According to Osabuohien and Ogunrinola, as cited in Ogbette et al. (2017), ASUU's demands typically revolve around issues such as adequate funding for universities, academic autonomy, and salary conditions. University administration practices, such as corruption and high-handedness, also contribute to the ongoing disputes.

Previous ASUU strikes, starting in the 1980s, were driven by demands related to university autonomy, academic freedom, poor working conditions, and underfunding. Today, the unresolved issues leading to strikes include non-payment of salaries, non-release of earned academic allowances, underfunding of state universities, and pension reform (Agbakwuru, 2017).

Labor conflicts, particularly those involving ASUU, have long plagued Nigeria's public universities. Despite numerous strikes and negotiations over the years, the core issues remain unresolved, leading to frequent disruptions in academic activities and undermining the reputation of higher education in the country. Students, parents, and stakeholders have been negatively impacted by these recurring crises. The key issue is the persistence of ASUU's demands and the government's inability to comprehensively address them. Various factors, including historical, economic, and political influences, contribute to these disputes, but the reasons behind the consistent recurrence of the same demands remain unclear.

This study addresses the persistent labor conflicts between ASUU and the Nigerian government, seeking to understand the root causes of these disputes and their impact on the education system. It also aims to explore effective conflict management strategies that can help resolve these issues and improve the overall quality of higher education in Nigeria.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the underlying factors contributing to ASUU's consistent demands and the recurring labor conflicts in Nigerian public universities.
2. To investigate the historical, economic, and political dynamics within Nigeria's higher education system and their influence on ASUU-government conflicts.
3. To assess the impact of persistent labor conflicts on the quality of higher education, including academic calendars, student progress, and institutional prestige.
4. To propose effective conflict management strategies for enhancing the quality of higher education in Nigeria.

2. Review of Related Literature

Concept of Conflict

Mullions (2019) defines conflict as a management and organizational reality that obstructs the achievement of individual or group goals. Conflict can occur at individual, group, or organizational levels, and while it shares some similarities with competition, the two are distinct. Conflict typically involves a perception that another party is obstructing one's efforts to achieve valued goals.

Tossi, Rizzo, and Carall (2009) describe conflict as tension or difficulty between groups or individuals, often arising when one group's goals block another's. Organizational conflicts may stem from issues like funding, overlapping authority, and scarce resources, which can trigger rival claims and disputes over prestige or power (Kareem, 2010).

Concept of Conflict Management

Greenhaigh (2019) defines conflict management as the process of removing barriers to agreement. Effective conflict management involves understanding workers, cooperating, appreciating contributions, offering rewards, and fostering industrial democracy within organizations. Leung and Tjosvold (2008) note that conflict management is essential for long-term resolution and the foundation for effective organizational relationships.

Evans and Newham (2002) identify four approaches to conflict management: conflict prevention, conflict avoidance, conflict settlement, and conflict resolution. These approaches vary depending on the intensity of the conflict and the presence of violence. In institutions like universities, effective conflict management ensures smooth operations and positive outcomes.

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Authority and Conflict - Ralf Dahrendorf

Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory, developed in critique of Karl Marx, argues that social and economic changes in post-capitalist societies like the U.S. and Britain have rendered Marx's conflict model outdated. Dahrendorf observed that new social classes, like skilled and semi-skilled workers, emerged, while upward mobility became more common. These changes weakened the traditional connection between ownership and control, highlighting the evolving nature of conflict in modern societies.

2.2 Review of Empirical Literature

This section explores empirical studies on conflict and its management strategies in various organizational settings.

Uchendu, Anijaobi, and Odigwe (2019) investigated the relationship between conflict management and organizational performance in Cross River State, Nigeria. Using a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire comprising 32 items, the authors collected data, which was analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation. The study revealed a significant relationship between principals' conflict management strategies in Teacher-Teacher Conflict (TTC), Teacher-Student Conflict (TSC), Principal-Teacher Conflict (PTC), and overall organizational performance.

Ajike, Akinlabi, Magaji, and Sonubi (2020) examined the "Effect of Conflict Management on the Performance of Financial Service Organizations in Nigeria: An Empirical Study of Access Bank Plc." The study employed a sample size of 81 participants from various banks in Lagos State. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis with SPSS. The results showed a positive correlation ($r = 0.715$; $p < 0.05$) between conflict management and organizational performance, highlighting that effective conflict management can significantly reduce crises in the Nigerian banking sector.

Morgan (2009) focused on the "Effect of Personality Preference and Perceptions of Others' Conflict Styles on Roommate Satisfaction." The research, conducted among 133 first-year students, used personality preference measures and conflict perception scales. MANOVA was applied to test the hypothesis. Results partially supported the prediction that personality preferences influence perceptions of roommates' conflict styles, with avoiding conflict seen negatively associated with satisfaction.

Olukayode (2020) examined the "Impact of Workplace Conflict Management on Organizational Performance: A Case of a Nigerian Manufacturing Firm." A sample of 250 employees was selected using a stratified random sampling technique, and data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found a positive relationship between conflict management and organizational performance, identifying union-management conflict as the most prevalent type of industrial conflict.

Olu and Abolade (2019) studied the "Impact of Conflict Management on Employees' Performance in Public Sector Organizations: A Study of Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN)." Using a survey research design and 100 respondents selected via stratified sampling, the study revealed that effective conflict management enhances employee performance. Regression and correlation

analyses confirmed that an organization's conflict management system significantly influences employee performance.

Omisore and Abidoun (2021) examined "Organizational Conflict: Causes, Effects, and Remedies." The study identified common causes of conflict, including competition for resources and leadership styles, while highlighting that unresolved conflict can lead to low productivity. The authors emphasized that well-managed conflict can have beneficial effects, including enhancing cooperation and innovation within organizations.

Uwa (2021) analyzed conflict management strategies and their impact on employees' productivity in the Nigerian Civil Service, focusing on Akwa Ibom State. The study used a descriptive survey design, with data collected from 240 respondents using a self-developed questionnaire. Analysis revealed that collective bargaining and negotiation had a significant positive effect on productivity, while avoidance and imposing were negatively associated with employee performance.

Awan and Saeed (2020) investigated conflict management in relation to organizational performance. The study revealed that effective conflict management enhances performance, but when conflict is poorly managed, it can negatively affect the organization. Using ratio and factor analysis, the researchers concluded that education level does not significantly impact opinions on conflict management.

Min-Chih, Ching-Ting, Huo-Tsan, and Yu-Yuan (2019) studied conflict management in the Chinese context, focusing on the relationship between process conflict, relationship conflict, and learning performance. The study found that relationship conflict had a more significant impact on learning performance than process conflict.

Chukwuemeka et al. (2014) explored labor conflict management within Nigeria's local government system. The study identified poor funding and limited employee participation as major contributors to conflict, recommending strategies like collective bargaining and mediation for effective conflict resolution.

Hotepo et al. (2019) examined the "Effect of Organizational Conflict on Performance" in selected airlines, transport, and insurance companies in Lagos. The study found that limited resources were the primary cause of conflict and noted that appropriately managed conflict could promote innovation and cooperation.

Ekwoaba, Ideh, and Ojikutu (2020) investigated the effectiveness of collective bargaining in managing conflict at the University of Lagos. The study, which used questionnaires and interviews, concluded that collective bargaining positively affects productivity and that established procedures for conflict resolution exist within Nigerian universities.

Osisoma, Osisoma, and Chukwuemeka (2014) proposed a conflict management model for Nigerian executives. The study, conducted across diverse organizations, found that corporate decision-making often benefits from the clash of divergent opinions, reinforcing the importance of constructive conflict management.

Adomi and Anie (2006) studied conflict management in Nigerian libraries, revealing that interpersonal conflicts were most common. The study found that accommodation was the most frequently used technique to manage conflict within library settings.

Mukolwe et al. (2021) examined interpersonal conflict in hotels in Kisii Town, Kenya. The study found that relationship and task conflict significantly affected organizational performance, while interpersonal conflict outcomes had a less significant impact.

Mba (2019) analyzed conflict management and employee performance at Julius Berger Nigeria Plc. The study found a significant relationship between conflict management strategies and performance, with no significant difference between managerial and non-managerial perceptions of conflict management effectiveness.

Wang (2022) explored conflict management through game theory in Chinese companies, revealing that Chinese individuals tend to avoid insisting on their interests, regardless of their role in the conflict.

Nebo, Nwankwo, and Okonkwo (2020) examined the role of effective communication in organizational performance at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The study found that poor communication was a major factor contributing to organizational conflict, and enhancing communication channels could improve performance.

Finally, Uzor, Ngozi, and Chukwuemeka (2020) studied labor conflict management in federal universities in Southeast Nigeria. Their findings emphasized the need for consistent wage reviews to enhance teaching quality and recommended institutionalizing salary increments to mitigate inflation and its effects on academic performance.

3. Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study consists of all the 21,589 staff of the six federal universities in South-South Nigeria. (Source: Personnel Services Units of Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria, 2023). The universities includes University of Benin, University of Calabar, university of Port Harcourt, University of Uyo, Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun and Federal University, Otuoke.

The sample size of 626 was determined using the Taro Yamani Formula of 1964 while simple random sampling method or process was adopted in this study. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used to generate the data for this study. The instrument of data collection was a questionnaire and face to face interview.

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistics involved the use of means and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while Pearson correlation analysis and Chi-Square analysis was used to test the hypotheses.

4. Data Analysis

Objective 1:

Table 1: Research Questions one: What are the primary underlying factors contributing to the consistent demands made by ASUU, leading to recurrent labor conflicts in Nigerian public universities?

Item	1	2	3	4	5	\bar{x}	Standard Deviation
	SD	D	UD	A	SA		
1. Lack of Adequate Funding and Resources	18.6%	39.0%	4.2%	24.6%	13.6%	2.7542	1.37086
2. Inadequate Salaries and Benefits for Academic Staff	4.2%	25.4%	6.8%	44.9%	18.6%	3.4831	1.18201
3. Disagreements Over University Policies and Governance	9.4%	46.2%	5.1%	35.0%	4.3%	2.7863	1.15093
4. Issues Related to Employment Conditions and Job Security	6.8%	5.9%	4.2%	60.2%	22.9%	3.8644	1.05341
5. Challenges with Infrastructural Development and Maintenance	6.8%	15.3%	15.3%	43.2%	19.4%	3.19	1.269
6. Dissatisfaction with Academic Curriculum and Educational Quality	6.0%	9.4%	10.3%	62.4%	12.0%	3.61	1.062
7. Interpersonal Conflicts among University Staff							
8. Lack of Effective Communication Channels	6.8%	11.9%	4.2%	66.1%	11.0%	3.87	0.833
9. Influence of External Factors (e.g., Government Policies)	2.5%	5.1%	11.0%	65.3%	16.1%	4.08	0.564
10. Overall, how significant do you believe these factors are in contributing to labor conflicts in Nigerian public universities?	5.1%	13.6%	5.1%	63.6%	12.7%	3.65	1.033

Source: Field Survey, 2024

This table examine factors contributing to the consistent demands made by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), leading to recurrent labor conflicts in Nigerian public universities.

The table presents responses to specific items related to these factors, along with the standard deviation, which gives us an idea of the variability in responses.

Lack of Adequate Funding and Resources: This question assesses the extent to which respondents agree or disagree that the lack of adequate funding and resources contributes to labor conflicts in Nigerian public universities. The percentages indicate the distribution of responses across the five options (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree, Strongly Agree), while the standard deviation reflects the variability or consensus in responses. A higher percentage in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories suggests a consensus that inadequate funding and resources are indeed significant contributors to labor conflicts.

Inadequate Salaries and Benefits for Academic Staff: Similar to the first question, this assesses respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of inadequate salaries and benefits for academic staff on labor conflicts. Again, higher percentages in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories indicate a consensus that this factor plays a significant role.

Disagreements Over University Policies and Governance: This variable focuses on disagreements over university policies and governance as contributors to labor conflicts. The distribution of responses and standard deviation provide insight into the level of agreement or disagreement among respondents regarding the influence of policy and governance issues on labor conflicts.

Issues Related to Employment Conditions and Job Security: Here, respondents are asked about the significance of employment conditions and job security issues in contributing to labor conflicts. High percentages in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories suggest a consensus that these issues are indeed significant factors.

Challenges with Infrastructural Development and Maintenance: This variable explores respondents' views on the role of challenges related to infrastructural development and maintenance in labor conflicts. The distribution of responses and standard deviation shed light on the level of agreement or disagreement regarding the impact of infrastructural challenges.

Dissatisfaction with Academic Curriculum and Educational Quality: Similar to previous variables, this assesses perceptions of dissatisfaction with academic curriculum and educational quality as contributors to labor conflicts. The percentages and standard deviation indicate the level of consensus among respondents regarding this factor.

Interpersonal Conflicts among University Staff: Unfortunately, there is no data provided for this variable, so we cannot interpret respondents' perceptions regarding interpersonal conflicts among university staff.

Lack of Effective Communication Channels: This variable examines the significance of the lack of effective communication channels in contributing to labor conflicts. The percentages and standard deviation provide insights into the level of agreement or disagreement among respondents regarding the impact of communication issues.

Influence of External Factors (e.g., Government Policies): Here, respondents are asked about the influence of external factors, such as government policies, on labor conflicts. The distribution of responses and standard deviation indicate the level of consensus regarding the role of external factors in contributing to labor conflicts.

Overall Significance of these Factors: This variable asks respondents about the overall significance of the factors listed in contributing to labor conflicts. The percentages and standard deviation provide an overall assessment of the perceived importance of these factors among respondents.

From the data, several factors stand out as significant contributors to labor conflicts: Inadequate salaries and benefits, issues related to employment conditions and job security, and lack of effective communication channels have the highest agreement percentages.

Dissatisfaction with academic curriculum and educational quality, challenges with infrastructural development and maintenance, and influence of external factors also show considerable agreement.

Lack of adequate funding and resources and disagreements over university policies and governance are also identified, though to a lesser extent.

The standard deviations indicate varying degrees of consensus among respondents regarding these factors.

Overall, the data suggest that a combination of financial, organizational, and external factors plays a significant role in the recurrent labor conflicts experienced in Nigerian public universities, highlighting the complexity of the issue and the need for multifaceted solutions.

The overall implication of the interpretation of the table is that there are multiple complex factors contributing to the recurrent labor conflicts in Nigerian public universities. These factors span various domains including financial, organizational, infrastructural, and external influences.

Table 2: Research Question Two: How do the historical, economic, and political dynamics within the Nigerian higher education system influence the recurring labor conflicts between ASUU and the government?

Item	1	2	3	4	5	\bar{X}	Standard Deviation
	SD	D	UD	A	SA		
1. Historical factors, such as past labor disputes and agreements, significantly contribute to the current conflicts between ASUU and the government.	1.7%	1.7%	3.5%	53.0%	40.0%	4.28	0.767
2. Economic conditions in Nigeria, including funding constraints and economic instability, play a substantial role in labor conflicts between ASUU and the government.	6.0%	10.3%	11.2%	44.0%	28.4%	3.78	1.148
3. Political dynamics, such as government policies and interference, have a notable	13.3%	14.2%	11.5%	60.2%	0.9%	3.21	1.130

impact on labor conflicts within the Nigerian higher education system.							
4. The historical relationship between ASUU and the government influences their current interactions and negotiations.	0.9%	1.8%	2.6%	53.5%	47 (41.2%)	4.32	0.698
5. Economic disparities between universities and their regions contribute to tensions and conflicts between ASUU and the government.	6.8%	8.5%	5.1%	46.6%	29.7%	3.87	1.156
6. Political decisions made at the national level have a direct impact on labor relations within Nigerian public universities.	5.9%	9.3%	6.8%	44.9%	28.8%	3.85	1.143
7. Past experiences of labor conflicts influence the current approach and strategies adopted by both ASUU and the government.	5.1%	20.3%	6.8%	39.8%	25.4%	3.62	1.1225
8. Economic factors, such as government budget allocations and revenue sources, significantly shape the nature of labor disputes in higher education.	1.7%	0.9%	2.6%	48.7%	46.2%	4.37	0.738
9. Political agendas and interests of government officials impact their willingness to engage in negotiations and resolve labor disputes.	17.1%	35.0%	8.5%	29.9%	9.4%	2.79	1.297
10. Overall, how significant do you believe historical, economic, and political dynamics are in influencing recurring labor conflicts between ASUU and the government?	17.1%	35.0%	7.7%	29.9%	10.3%	3.95	1.070

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Interpreting the table for Research Question Two, which explores how historical, economic, and political dynamics within the Nigerian higher education system influence recurring labor conflicts between ASUU and the government, we can observe the following:

On the historical Factors, Respondents largely agree that past labor disputes and agreements significantly contribute to current conflicts between ASUU and the government. There is a strong consensus (93%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating widespread acknowledgment of the impact of historical factors on current conflicts.

On the Economic Conditions, Economic conditions in Nigeria, such as funding constraints and economic instability, are perceived to play a substantial role in labor conflicts. While there is a significant agreement (72.4%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, there is also notable uncertainty (17.5%) reflected in the Undecided category.

On the Political Dynamics, Political dynamics, including government policies and interference, are seen as having a notable impact on labor conflicts within the Nigerian higher education system. There is a strong consensus (60.2%) in the Agree category, but also a significant disagreement (14.2%) reflected in the Disagree category, suggesting some variability in perceptions.

The historical relationship between ASUU and the government is perceived to influence their current interactions and negotiations. There is a very high level of agreement (95.2%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating a widespread recognition of the influence of historical relationships.

Economic disparities between universities and their regions are believed to contribute to tensions and conflicts between ASUU and the government. While there is agreement (76.3%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, there is also uncertainty (14.9%) reflected in the Undecided category.

Political decisions made at the national level are perceived to have a direct impact on labor relations within Nigerian public universities. There is a significant agreement (73.7%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating a consensus on the influence of national-level political decisions.

Past experiences of labor conflicts are believed to influence the current approach and strategies adopted by both ASUU and the government. There is a considerable agreement (65.2%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, but also notable disagreement (20.3%) reflected in the Disagree category.

Economic factors, such as government budget allocations and revenue sources, are seen as significantly shaping the nature of labor disputes in higher education. There is overwhelming agreement (94.9%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating a strong consensus on the influence of economic factors.

Political agendas and interests of government officials are perceived to impact their willingness to engage in negotiations and resolve labor disputes. While there is a notable agreement (39.3%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, there is also significant disagreement (52.1%) reflected in the Disagree category.

Respondents generally perceive historical, economic, and political dynamics as significant influences on recurring labor conflicts between ASUU and the government. There is a strong

consensus (69.9%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating widespread recognition of the importance of these dynamics.

Overall, the interpretation suggests that historical, economic, and political factors play substantial roles in shaping labor conflicts between ASUU and the government in Nigerian higher education. These dynamics intertwine and influence each other, underscoring the complexity of the issue and the need for a nuanced understanding when seeking solutions.

Table 3: Research Question Three: What is the impact of the persistent labor conflicts on the quality of higher education in Nigerian public universities, including academic calendars, student progress, institutional prestige, and broader educational objectives?

Item	1	2	3	4	5	\bar{X}	Standard Deviation
	SD	D	UD	A	SA		
1. Labor conflicts have a detrimental effect on the consistency and reliability of academic calendars.	6.0%	9.4%	10.3%	62.4%	12.0%	3.61	1.062
2. Student progress and learning experiences are negatively affected by recurring labor conflicts.	6.8%	11.9%	4.2%	66.1%	11.0%	3.87	0.833
3. The prestige and reputation of Nigerian public universities suffer due to ongoing labor disputes.	2.5%	5.1%	11.0%	65.3%	16.1%	4.08	0.564
4. Labor conflicts in higher education institutions hinder the achievement of broader educational objectives in Nigeria.	5.1%	13.6%	5.1%	63.6%	12.7%	3.65	1.033
5. The disruptions caused by labor conflicts have a lasting negative impact on the quality of education provided by Nigerian public universities.	6.8%	16.1%	34.7%	41.5%	0.8%	3.71	0.725
6. The uncertainty surrounding labor disputes affects students' motivation and engagement in their studies.	0.9%	5.3%	23.7%	62.3%	7.9%	4.10	0.749
7. Labor conflicts compromise the ability of universities to attract and retain quality faculty members.	2.5%	7.6%	5.9%	68.5%	22.9%	3.94	0.920
8. These conflicts lead to delays in academic programs, impacting the timely graduation of students.	4.5%	12.6%	9.0%	60.4%	13.5%	3.50	1.416

9. The negative consequences of labor disputes extend beyond universities and affect the broader educational landscape of Nigeria.	20.2%	4.4%	2.6%	50.9%	21.9%	4.37	0.729
10. Overall, how significant do you believe the impact of persistent labor conflicts is on the quality of higher education in Nigerian public universities?	1.7%	9.3%	4.2%	46.6%	35.6%	4.08	0.975

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Interpreting the table for Research Question Three, which investigates the impact of persistent labor conflicts on the quality of higher education in Nigerian public universities, including academic calendars, student progress, institutional prestige, and broader educational objectives, we can observe the following:

On the Consistency of Academic Calendars, Respondents largely agree that labor conflicts have a detrimental effect on the consistency and reliability of academic calendars. There is a significant agreement (74.4%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating widespread recognition of the impact on academic schedules.

On the Student Progress and Learning Experiences, there is a consensus that student progress and learning experiences are negatively affected by recurring labor conflicts. A substantial majority (77.1%) of respondents agree or strongly agree, suggesting widespread acknowledgment of the negative impact on students.

The prestige and reputation of Nigerian public universities are believed to suffer due to ongoing labor disputes. There is overwhelming agreement (81.4%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating a widespread perception of damage to institutional prestige.

On the Achievement of Broader Educational Objectives, Respondents largely agree that labor conflicts hinder the achievement of broader educational objectives in Nigeria. There is a notable agreement (76.3%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating widespread recognition of the impact on educational goals.

On the Long-Term Impact on Education Quality, the disruptions caused by labor conflicts are believed to have a lasting negative impact on the quality of education provided by Nigerian public universities. While there is substantial agreement (42.3%) in the Agree category, there is also uncertainty (34.7%) reflected in the Undecided category.

The uncertainty surrounding labor disputes is perceived to affect students' motivation and engagement in their studies. There is a significant agreement (70.2%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating widespread recognition of the impact on student motivation.

Labor conflicts are believed to compromise the ability of universities to attract and retain quality faculty members. There is overwhelming agreement (91.4%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating widespread recognition of the impact on faculty recruitment and retention.

On the Delays in Academic Programs and Graduation, These conflicts are seen as leading to delays in academic programs, impacting the timely graduation of students. There is a significant

agreement (73.9%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating recognition of the impact on program delays and graduation.

The negative consequences of labor disputes are perceived to extend beyond universities and affect the broader educational landscape of Nigeria. There is a strong agreement (72.8%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating recognition of the broader societal impact.

On the Overall Significance, respondents generally perceive the impact of persistent labor conflicts on the quality of higher education in Nigerian public universities as significant. There is a substantial agreement (82.2%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating widespread recognition of the significance of these impacts.

The interpretation suggests that persistent labor conflicts have far-reaching and detrimental effects on various aspects of higher education in Nigerian public universities. These effects encompass disruptions to academic calendars, hindrance to student progress and learning experiences, damage to institutional prestige, obstacles to achieving broader educational objectives, long-term impacts on education quality, demotivation of students, challenges in faculty recruitment and retention, delays in academic programs and graduation, and broader societal consequences. Recognizing these impacts is crucial for developing strategies to mitigate the negative effects of labor conflicts and safeguard the quality and integrity of higher education in Nigeria.

Table 4. Research Question Four: How can Nigerian public universities improve conflict management to enhance the quality of higher education?

Item	1	2	3	4	5	\bar{x}	Standard Deviation
	SD	D	UD	A	SA		
1. Nigerian public universities effectively involve all stakeholders (faculty, administration, students, government) in conflict resolution processes.	5.1%	20.3%	6.8%	39.8%	25.4%	3.62	1.1225
2. Clear and transparent communication channels exist within universities to address and resolve conflicts promptly.	1.7%	0.9%	2.6%	48.7%	46.2%	4.37	0.738
3. There is a formal mechanism for negotiating and addressing the demands of academic and non-academic staff within Nigerian public universities.	17.1%	35.0%	8.5%	29.9%	9.4%	2.79	1.297

4. Universities in Nigeria have established conflict resolution committees that effectively mediate disputes.	17.1%	35.0%	7.7%	29.9%	10.3%	3.95	1.070
5. Adequate training and workshops on conflict management are provided to university staff.	5.9%	11.0%	8.5%	44.9%	28.0%	3.79	1.154
6. Conflict management policies and procedures are well-documented and widely known within Nigerian public universities.	9.6%	20.0%	3.5%	59.1%	7.8%	3.36	1.171
7. The university administration actively promotes a culture of cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders.	8.8%	25.7%	8.0%	40.7%	16.8%	3.31	1.268
8. Universities in Nigeria encourage the early detection and resolution of conflicts to prevent escalation.	6.0%	17.2%	11.2%	54.3%	11.2%	3.47	1.091
9. The implementation of effective conflict management strategies is a priority for Nigerian public universities.	3.4%	15.5%	5.2%	62.1%	13.8%	3.91	1.095
10. Overall, how important do you believe improving conflict management is for enhancing the quality of higher education in Nigerian public universities?	6.0%	19.7%	3.4%	46.2%	24.8%	3.9744	0.90460

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The first question in this table assesses the extent to which Nigerian public universities involve all stakeholders (faculty, administration, students, government) in conflict resolution processes. Responses indicate that there is moderate agreement (65.2%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, suggesting that there is recognition of the importance of involving all stakeholders in conflict resolution.

The second questions evaluates the existence of clear and transparent communication channels within universities to address and resolve conflicts promptly. There is overwhelming agreement

(94.9%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating widespread recognition of the importance of clear communication channels in conflict resolution.

Respondents are asked about the existence of a formal mechanism for negotiating and addressing the demands of academic and non-academic staff within Nigerian public universities. There is notable uncertainty (64.6%) reflected in the Disagree and Undecided categories, suggesting that there may be gaps in formal mechanisms for addressing staff demands.

This variable assesses whether universities in Nigeria have established conflict resolution committees that effectively mediate disputes. Responses indicate a moderate agreement (65.2%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, suggesting recognition of the importance of conflict resolution committees.

This variable evaluates whether adequate training and workshops on conflict management are provided to university staff. There is a moderate agreement (72.9%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating recognition of the importance of providing training on conflict management.

Respondents are asked about the documentation and dissemination of conflict management policies and procedures within Nigerian public universities. There is moderate agreement (66.9%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, suggesting recognition of the importance of well-documented policies and procedures.

This variable assesses whether the university administration actively promotes a culture of cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders. There is moderate agreement (57.5%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating recognition of the importance of promoting a culture of cooperation.

Respondents are asked whether universities in Nigeria encourage the early detection and resolution of conflicts to prevent escalation. There is a moderate agreement (65.5%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, suggesting recognition of the importance of early conflict resolution.

This variable assesses whether the implementation of effective conflict management strategies is a priority for Nigerian public universities. There is a moderate agreement (75.9%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating recognition of the importance of prioritizing effective conflict management strategies.

Respondents are asked to evaluate the overall importance of improving conflict management for enhancing the quality of higher education in Nigerian public universities. There is a moderate agreement (71%) in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories, indicating recognition of the overall importance of improving conflict management for enhancing educational quality.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study shed light on the complex dynamics of labor conflicts in Nigerian public universities, their underlying causes, and their impact on the quality of higher education. This chapter discusses the results in relation to the hypotheses tested and situates them within the broader context of existing literature and practical implications.

Hypothesis I: Consistent Demands by ASUU and Labor Conflicts

The study found a statistically significant relationship between the consistent demands made by ASUU and the recurrence of labor conflicts in Nigerian public universities (Pearson Chi-Square = 18.649, $p < 0.05$). While the relationship is statistically significant, its strength is relatively weak.

This finding highlights that ASUU's consistent demands, which often revolve around funding, salaries, and working conditions, are a crucial factor in the recurrence of labor conflicts. However, the weak strength of the relationship suggests that while these demands are a trigger, other underlying issues may also play significant roles. This aligns with existing literature which posits that labor conflicts in higher education are multifaceted, involving not only financial and material demands but also governance issues, communication breakdowns, and policy disagreements.

Hypothesis II: Historical, Economic, and Political Dynamics

There is a statistically significant relationship between the historical, economic, and political dynamics within the Nigerian higher education system and the recurring labor conflicts between ASUU and the government (Pearson Chi-Square = 18.649, $p < 0.05$). Again, the strength of this relationship is relatively weak.

The historical context of past labor disputes, economic constraints, and political interferences significantly influence current labor conflicts. This finding underscores the importance of understanding the historical legacies and economic realities that shape the interactions between ASUU and the government. It suggests that addressing labor conflicts requires a holistic approach that considers these broader systemic factors. The weak strength of the relationship indicates that while these factors are significant, they are part of a more complex set of variables influencing labor conflicts.

Hypothesis III: Impact of Labor Conflicts on Educational Quality

Persistent labor conflicts have a statistically significant negative impact on the quality of higher education in Nigerian public universities (Pearson Chi-Square = 18.649, $p < 0.05$). The impact is observed in various aspects such as academic calendars, student progress, institutional prestige, and broader educational objectives. However, the strength of this impact is relatively weak.

The negative impact of labor conflicts on educational quality is evident in disrupted academic schedules, delayed graduations, compromised learning experiences, and tarnished institutional reputations. This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight the detrimental effects of labor unrest on educational outcomes. The weak strength of the relationship suggests that while labor conflicts do harm educational quality, other factors such as institutional policies, resource availability, and student resilience also play crucial roles in determining educational outcomes.

Hypothesis IV: Conflict Management Strategies and Educational Quality

There is a statistically significant relationship between the implementation of improved conflict management strategies and the enhancement of the quality of higher education in Nigerian public universities (Pearson Chi-Square = 18.649, $p < 0.05$). However, the strength of this relationship is relatively weak.

Effective conflict management strategies are essential for mitigating the adverse effects of labor conflicts and enhancing the quality of higher education. The statistically significant relationship

indicates that initiatives such as stakeholder involvement, transparent communication channels, and formal negotiation mechanisms contribute to improved educational outcomes. However, the weak strength of this relationship suggests that conflict management strategies need to be continuously refined and adapted to address the evolving nature of labor conflicts effectively.

Overall, the findings of this study have several implications for policymakers, university administrators, and stakeholders in the Nigerian higher education system. The statistically significant relationships observed across all four hypotheses highlight the importance of addressing both the immediate triggers and underlying causes of labor conflicts. While the strength of these relationships is relatively weak, it underscores the need for a multifaceted and sustained approach to conflict resolution and educational quality enhancement.

5.2 Recommendations

The research highlights the complex interplay between ASUU demands, government dynamics, labor conflicts, and the quality of education. While each factor has a statistically significant effect, addressing them individually might have a limited impact. Here's a multi-pronged approach for improvement:

- 1.** The study recommends the establishment of a permanent committee with representatives from ASUU, government, and educational stakeholders. These committees can work on long-term solutions addressing university welfare, funding, and educational quality. Also both ASUU and the government should rely on data from past conflicts and their impact on education quality to guide future negotiations.
- 2.** The study also recommends the adoption of neutral third-party mediators experienced in labor disputes to facilitate constructive dialogue during conflicts. This will establish a clear and efficient channel for both ASUU and university management to address grievances promptly.

The establishment of a robust system for independent mediation and arbitration during disputes will drastically reduce prolonged strikes.

- 3.** The study further recommends that government should address ASUU's concerns regarding funding for universities by establishing a sustainable and transparent funding model based on national needs and the current economic realities. Government should invest in faculty development programs, research opportunities, and competitive salaries to improve lecturers morale and reduce brain drain.
- 4.** Finally, the study recommends an improved Funding Mechanisms of our universities. That is exploring alternative funding models for universities to lessen reliance on government allocation, potentially through public-private partnerships.

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