



Economic Impact of Lecturer's Strike and Migration of Nigerian Students to Republic of Benin for Undergraduate Studies

Sule Abiodun

Niomr Research Lagos, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The study examined the economic impact of lecturer's strike and migration of Nigerian students to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies. The study setting was in the Houdegbe North American University, Cotonou. The study adopted the descriptive research of a survey type of design. A sample size of 370 was generated for the study using the Yaro Yamane formula. Data for this study were collected with the use of a questionnaire. Data collected were statistically treated with frequency and weighted Tmean. The major findings show that: the level of Nigerian student migration to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies in spite of incessant strike action by lecturers is high. It was also revealed that there are reasons for Nigerian student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies in spite of lecturer's strike action. Finally, it was revealed that there is an effect of student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies on Nigeria economy in spite of lecturer's incessant strike action. It was recommended among others that government should strengthen its education system, perhaps with the help of innovative technologies and infrastructures to reduce excessive spending from parents sending their children to neighbouring countries in order to reduce its bad effect on the nation's economy.

Keywords: Lecturer's Strike, ASUU, Cotonou, Students,

1 Introduction

Over the years, lecturer's in Nigerian universities have expressed their concerns over the deplorable condition of the educational sector in Nigeria, while billions of naira are spent on unproductive ventures, with attendant widespread corruption (ASUU, 2013). This pathetic situation has led to various strikes over the years. Notably, there were strikes of seven months in 1996; six months each in 1981, 1992, 1994, 2003 and 2013; five months each in 1995, 1998, 1999 and 2010; four months in 2009 and 2018; three months each in 2002, 2007 and 2011; two months in 2001; one month in 2017; and nine months in 2020. All these cumulated to a total of six years, seven months and twenty days. Scholars like (Albar, 2016; Uzoh, 2017) posited that the actions of lecturers were not self-centred but incited by the quest to resuscitate the falling standard of education. Lecturers, thus, agitated for increased university autonomy; improvement in the provision of educational infrastructure in universities; as well as urging the government to implement the 26% budgetary allocation to education prescribed by UNESCO. The target was to revamp the education system such that Nigerian universities' graduates are capable of taking up the task of national development and be globally competitive as it was in the 1970s when Nigeria graduates were accorded high esteem internationally. Furthermore, the agitations of lecturers are to avail better conditions of service which would go a long way in stimulating conducive atmosphere for students to accomplish their study. And, this would reduce to the barest minimum if not to zero levels, the unskilled graduates that universities are turning out lately.

Unfortunately, the industrial actions that were always embarked upon by Lecturers to compel the government to meet their needs and to improve funding, autonomy, wages and allowances and infrastructural facilities; always affect students. During such industrial actions, schools were shut down for months; academic activities were paralyzed, and students may be exposed to learning, which will encourage the production of unskilled graduates. Akah (2018) noted that the incessant industrial actions by lecturers led to the closure of schools for a period of time, which might be specified or indefinite. At such periods, no academic activity took place in the universities. Upon resumption, students in most times were denied opportunities to make up for the lost time. This laterally resulted in the compressed academic calendar and syllabus and parts of the curriculum being skipped, while some course contents would not be treated. The student would have to write their exams haphazardly, which later metamorphose into decline in quality of

education. These scenarios have left many employers with the task of spending millions of Naira in giving training to these graduates before putting them into a proper task.

Ostensibly, multifarious studies have been conducted (Uzoh, 2017; Yusuf, 2017) to ascertain the implications of lecturer's industrial actions on the university community and students to be precise. However, most of these studies were carried out among lecturers, university administrators and government officials, focusing on the impact of lecturer's strike on either student's performance or student academic development. Thus, for neutrality, authenticity, and extension of frontiers of knowledge, the extent of this impact can be better appreciated when considered from the perspective of its wider implications on the recipients of university education (students). This is because students are at the hub of the learning process. Likewise, they are always at the receiving end of lecturer's strike actions because their educational success had always been in jeopardy which often make them migrate to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies. This thus justified the investigative attention paid to this study.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The university worldwide is regarded as the citadel of knowledge, the fountain of intellectualism, the most appropriate ground for the training of future leaders. However, over the last thirty years in Nigeria, the University system has witnessed unprecedented strike actions than other sectors. Statistics revealed that from 1981 to 2020, lecturers have embarked on industrial strike actions about 24 times to drive home their demands. The last one in 2020 lasted for nine months amidst Covid-19 lockdown. These numerous strike actions always led to the disruption of the university academic calendar as well as loss of academic sessions, which might pave way for mediocrity and academic backwardness. Aside from mediocrity, strike actions delay and extend the duration of studies in university in the face of the age barrier in the Nigerian labour market. In some cases, strike actions avail students of criminal activities, such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and cultism. These crimes have made the youth a problem to societal peace and order in Nigeria. This ultimately account for the reason why many students prefer to migrate to tertiary institutions in neighbouring African countries (Republic of Benin)

Surprisingly, researchers like Akah (2010); Ibrahim & Yakubu (2017) postulated that lecturers strike actions are the last option that is potent enough to influence government decisions in the face of underfunding of the university system, infrastructural decay and deficit, inadequate instructional facilities and poor conditions of services for academic staff. These positions, however, have generated a lot of heated arguments and diverse opinions among stakeholders in the educational sector. Some scholars and peace experts believed that lecturers are justified in carrying out the incessant industrial actions considering the dilapidated condition of public universities. Meanwhile, parents, religious leaders as well as some sections of the general public believed that lecturers are not sensitive to the plight of the students who were being negatively affected by such actions. Even the government argued that ASUU's demands are unrealistic and unjustifiable when considered alongside the needs of other sectors and unions. Lecturers were labelled as greedy, inconsiderate, as well as a political watchdog of the government's actions and inactions, which neglected its primary mandate of teaching, research and community service.

Basically, these arguments further led to unbridled anxiety, anger, uneasiness and frustration among parents, clergies, traditional rulers, business-men and women, civil society groups, civil servants who among them decide to allow their wards to migrate to neighbouring countries (Benin Republic) for the completion of their undergraduate studies. Considering the trajectory of the cycle of strike actions, it has made some quarters of Nigerian students believe that lecturer's strike actions were a curse to them while others believe it was a blessing in disguise. In this light of this, the study focused on the economic impact of lecturer's strike and migration of Nigerian students to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Generally, the study aimed at investigating the economic impact of lecturer's strike and migration of Nigerian students to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

1. determine the level of Nigeria student migration to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies in spite of the incessant strike action by lecturers
2. determine the reasons Nigerians students are migrating to Benin republic in spite lecturer's strike action
3. determine the effect of student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies on Nigeria economy in spite lecturer's incessant strike action

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

This study seeks to address the fundamental problems of this study with the following questions:

- i. What is the level of Nigerian student migration to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies in spite of the incessant strike action by lecturers?
- ii. What are the reasons Nigerian students are migrating to the Benin republic in spite of lecturer's strike action?

- iii. What is the effect of student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies on Nigeria economy in spite lecturer's incessant strike action?

1.4 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

- i. The level of Nigerian student migration to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies in spite of the incessant strike action by lecturers is not high?
- ii. There are reasons for Nigerian student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies in spite of lecturer's strike action?
- iii. There is no effect of student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies on Nigeria economy in spite of the lecturer's incessant strike action?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Concept of Strike Actions

Strike actions have been observed by scholars and researchers in varied capacities. According to Fajana (2006), strike action is often a result of conflicting interests between employers and employees in respect to working conditions, wage demands, and management policies. Expanding on this definition, strike action refers to any action taken by any member or body of workers acting in combination or under a common understanding. Eneya & Maduabum (2013) defined it as a means of compelling their employer to accept or not to accept terms or conditions affecting employment. Agbana (2013) stated that strike action occurs as a result of dispute between employees and employers of labour, which could finally result to strikes, lockouts of which, both parties are affected in the short or long run. In view of this, Akah (2018) affirmed that, industrial action is a characteristic attribute of collective bargaining in particular and industrial relations in general. It is the weapon of power in the hands of lecturers against employers (University management and the Federal Government) utilised whenever the situation demands. From the dawn of the second republic till date, lecturers have had a series of face-offs with the Federal Government resulting to strike actions. Table 1 shows details below:

Table 1. Statistics of Lecturers Strikes in Nigeria 2001 – 2020

S/N	Years of Lecturer's Strike Action	Duration of Strike Action
1	2001	3 months
2	2002	2 months
3	2003/2004	6 months
4	2005	3 months
5	2006	2 months
6	2007	3 months
7	2008	1 week
8	2009	4 months
9	2010	5 months
10	2011/2012	3 months
11	2013	6 months
12	2017	1 months
13	2018	4 months
14	2020	9 months

Source: Authors Compilation (2021)

2.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework provides the basis upon which studies are built. This study is hinged on the Social Conflict Theory (SCT) proposed by Lewis Coser in 1956. The principal assumption of SCT rests on two opposing realistic viewpoints on the outcome of industrial conflict (Coser, 1956), that is, industrial conflict has both productive as well as potentials/outcomes (Ohanmu, & Fayeye, 2017). The outcomes of industrial conflict in organisations include: stimulation of innovation, creativity, and growth; improvement in organisational; alternative solutions to a problem may be found; conflict may lead to synergistic solutions to common problems; individual and group performance may be enhanced; individuals and groups may be forced to search for new approaches, and individuals and groups may be required to articulate and clarify their positions. Unresolved or reoccurrence of conflict may cause job stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction; the distortion and withholding of information to the detriment of others within the organisation, hostility, distrust, and suspicion during interactions; reduction in institutional performance; and increase in resistance to change. The preceding discussion suggests that the gamut of Lecturer's strike actions has both positive and negative consequences.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is a descriptive research of a survey type, aimed to determine the economic impact of lecturer's strike and migration of Nigerian students to Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies. This is in-line with Creswell (2009) who remarked that descriptive research gives the researcher the opportunity of sampling the opinions of significant large number of samples from the population of study so as to make generalisation with the valid responses.

The study was carried out in Cotonou, specifically at the Houdegbe North American University in the Republic of Benin. Houdegbe North American University was purposively chosen because 90 per cent of the students are Nigerians. Therefore, the study is targeted at 18,551 undergraduates across 13 faculties at the Houdegbe North American University. Consequently, the sample size for this study was calculated using Yaro Yamane's formula (1992). The computation is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where

n = Sample size

N = Population of Study

e = Tolerable error (5%)

Therefore:

$$n = \frac{9124}{1 + 9124(0.05)^2}$$

n = 382

Furthermore, using total enumeration and random sampling techniques, 382 undergraduates of Houdegbe North American University were selected. By this, seven out of 13 faculties at Houdegbe North American University were randomly selected, while 56 students were selected from each sampled faculty. This is in line with the assertion made by Abdulraheem and Atunde (2018) that a researcher can adopt and randomly select the entire sample size in a study if it is institutional-based, manageable, and the subjects can be easily accessed.

The research instrument used for data collection in this study is a four (4) point Likert scale 14-item self-designed questionnaire. The face and content validity of the instrument was ascertained by giving copies of the questionnaire, along-side the objectives of the study to three experts; two in Labour Studies, and an Evaluation Specialist. They checked the adequacy of the items to see if it would actually achieve its aim. Their comments and suggestions were dully adhered to for the final production of the questionnaire. Also, to ensure that the items in the questionnaire were consistent in measuring what they purported to; a pilot study was conducted on 30 selected students off Irgib Africa University, which was outside the area of study but still located in Cotonou. Their responses were analysed using Cronbach Alpha Reliability method. The reliability coefficient value of 0.74 was obtained. Furthermore, the researcher, with the help of three research assistants, administered 382 copies of the questionnaire directly on the subjects. The direct approach gave room for timely completion and return of the completed copies of the questionnaire. The response rate of the questionnaire was 97.7%, as 370 out of 382 administered questionnaires were returned and filled correctly. Due to the large area that this study is expected to cover, three research assistants who will be trained on how to administer the instrument are expected to be used to help in carrying out the exercise. Constant contact with the research assistants will be maintained by the researcher while they are on the field for data collection to ensure that the right thing is done.

Data collected on this study were presented on tables to reflect how they were collected. The data collected was analysed using frequency table (Research question 1 & 3) and weighted means statistics (Research question 2). The criterion means of 2.50 was used to determine the range and decision level. As a rule, where the mean score is equal to or above 2.50, the alternate hypothesis was accepted. Where the mean score was below 2.50, the alternate hypothesis was rejected.

To carefully and critically analyse data on this study, the researcher made use of SPSS version 26, an econometric software for data analysis for accurate decision making. The data were plotted to represent the quantitative variables and extent of responses to determine the acceptance or rejection of the research questions, which will enable the researcher in decision making.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results

The results of this study were presented in tables according to the individual research questions.

Research Question 1: What is the level of Nigeria student migration to Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies in spite the incessant strike action by lecturers?

H1: The level of Nigeria student migration to Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies in spite the incessant strike action by lecturers is not high

Variables	Respondents	
	(Frequency)	(Percentage)
Strongly Agree (SA)	38	10.3
Agree (AG)	44	11.9
Disagree (DA)	147	39.7
Strongly Disagree (SD)	141	38.1
Total	370	100.0

From this analysis above, a total of 288 respondents rejected that the level at which students are migrating to Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies in spite the incessant strike action by lecturers is not high. This corroborates the findings of Ynaija (2020), who stated that constant strikes encourage academic tourism among students who go to neighbouring countries like Ghana and Benin Republic to continue their education. They further stated that 90 per cent of students in Benin Republic universities are Nigerians. Punchng (2020) report justifies the claims of Ynaija (2020) which stated that in spite the incessant strike action by Nigerian lecturers, unaccredited universities in the Benin Republic, Niger and Ghana have now become a destination for Nigerian students for undergraduate studies. This goes to confirm that the level of Nigerian student migration to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies in spite the incessant strike action by lecturers is high. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis that states that level of Nigeria student migration to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies in spite the incessant strike action by lecturers is not high.

Research Question 2: What are the reasons Nigerians student are migrating to Benin republic in spite of lecturer's strike action?

H2: There are reasons to Nigerians student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies in spite of lecturer's strike action

S/N	Questionnaire	SA	A	D	SD	N	\bar{X}	Remarks
1	One of the reasons includes corruption	102 (27.6%)	118 (31.9%)	107 (28.9%)	43 (11.6%)	370	3.11	Accepted
2	Lack of appropriate funding for higher institution development	85 (23%)	145 (39.2%)	88 (23.8%)	52 (14.1%)	370	3.06	Accepted
3	Inability of Nigerian's institutions to accommodate its continuously rising population	77 (20.8%)	152 (41.1%)	86 (23.2%)	55 (14.9%)	370	3.03	Accepted
4	No better job opportunities after graduation	102 (27.6%)	153 (41.4%)	53 (14.3%)	62 (16.8%)	370	3.17	Accepted
5	Preference over foreign certificates	104 (28.1%)	153 (41.4%)	85 (23.0%)	28 (7.6%)	370	3.18	Accepted

All respondents accepted the view that there are reasons for Nigerian student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies in spite of lecturer's strike action. The views include: corruption, Lack of appropriate funding for higher institution development, Inability of Nigerian's institutions to accommodate its continuously rising population, no better job opportunities after graduation, Nigerian labour market has preferences over foreign certificates to local certificates. According to infoguideNigera (2018), they stated in their report that one of the reasons students prefer studying in labouring countries is because Nigerian institution lacks the capacity to compete with the top institution in the world in terms of standard and quality of education. This is because Nigerian institutions are poorly funded and therefore cannot meet up with the demands. Another reason stated by

infoguideNigera (2018) is that Nigerian universities have always struggled to accommodate students in their need for tertiary education. According to statistics provided by jamb in its official website in 2015, only 415,500 out of 1428,379 applicants were admitted into various universities in the country. This leaves out over a million applicants without admission. infoguideNigera (2018) further expatiated that lack of conducive and quality learning facilities, deplorable state of infrastructures, lack of qualified lecturers, corruption, poor social welfare packages for students are some of the many problems that have contributed to the low quality of Nigerian higher institutions and it has inevitably led to the migration of Nigerian students to neighbouring countries. This goes to confirm that there are reasons to Nigerian student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies in spite of lecturer's strike action. Therefore, we accept the alternate hypothesis that states there are reasons to Nigerians student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies in spite of lecturer's strike action.

Research Question 3: What is the effect of student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies on Nigeria economy inspite of lecturer's incessant strike action?

H3: There is no effect of student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies on Nigeria economy inspite

Variables	Respondents	
	(Frequency)	(Percentage)
Strongly Agree (SA)	21	5.7
Agree (AG)	68	18.4
Disagree (DA)	158	42.7
Strongly Disagree (SD)	123	33.2
Total	281	100.0

From the analysis above, a total of 281 respondents rejected that there is no effect of student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies on Nigeria economy in spite of lecturer's incessant strike action. This corroborates the findings of ICEF (2014) who stated that many Nigerian students are taking up places at private institutions in neighbouring countries but not only in Africa but in abroad which is having a negative impact on the economy because Nigerian parents spend up to N1.5 trillion yearly to send their wards for undergraduate degrees in foreign school which when utilised here, will go a long way in improving the nation's economy. According to ICEF (2014), when Nigerian students in neighbouring/foreign countries graduate, they look for jobs thereby neglecting the desire to return home to improve their home country with the knowledge acquired. This act is depreciating the economy of Nigeria (ICEF, 2014). These goes to show that that there is an effect of student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies on Nigeria economy in spite of lecturer's incessant strike action. Therefore, we reject null hypotheses that there is no effect of student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies on Nigeria economy in spite

5.0 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Learning across various universities in Nigeria is constantly hindered by lecturer's strike actions. These strike actions were usually caused by Federal, State governments and lecturers for non-implementation or partial implementation of signed agreements. The disagreement between government and lecturers usually result in deadlock, closure of schools which prompt parents to send their children to neighbouring countries for undergraduate studies which also have a negative impact on the nation's economy. In view of this, the present study found that the level of Nigerian student migration to the Republic of Benin for undergraduate studies in spite the incessant strike action by lecturers is high. It was also revealed that there are reasons to Nigerians student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies in spite of lecturer's strike action. Finally, it was revealed that there is an effect of student migration to Benin republic for undergraduate studies on Nigeria economy in spite of lecturer's incessant strike action.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are advanced

1. Nigeria government should improve its own education system, perhaps with the help of innovative technologies and infrastructures so as to reduce excessive spending from parents sending their children to neighbouring countries in other to reduce its bad effect on the nation's economy.
2. Nigeria government should make efforts to meet the requests of lecturers in due time and invest more in the educational sector to prevent incessant strike actions.
3. Nigeria government should develop actions such as organising meetings and interactive sessions that would help to checkmate incessant industrial actions.

4. Members of the lecturer's union should endeavour to demonstrate the spirit of tolerance so as to ensure the stability of academic calendars, sessions, and programmes of public universities. By doing this, the migration of students to neighbouring countries for undergraduate studies will be minimised.
5. There should be mitigation of bureaucracies to enhance effective communication between lecturers and government bodies.

REFERENCES

- Abdulraheem, J. W. & Atunde, M. O. (2018). Human resource management practices and library personnel job performance in public university libraries in North-Central Nigeria. *Journal of Educational thought*, 7 (2), 90-114
- Academic Staff Union of Universities (2013). The ASUU's press briefing on the current situation of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN)/Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) dispute by the President, Dr Nasir Fagge.
- Albar, A. A. (2016). The influence of university strikes on educational systems: An exploratory pilot study on Nigerian students. *International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology*, 6 (3), 45-54.
- Agbana, A. F. (2015). Industrial crisis, conflict resolution and collective bargaining in University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital, Ilorin, Kwara State. M.Phil thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Akah, A. U. (2018). ASUU strike: The federal government and Nigerian educational system. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 6 (5), 19-32.
- Coser, L. A. (1956). *The functions of social conflict*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Designing design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (3rd Ed.). United States of America: Sage Publications Inc
- Eneya, A. N. & Madaubum, C. P. (2013). *Course material on industrial relations in Nigeria (PSM 815)*. Abuja: National Open University of Nigeria.
- Fajana, S. (2006). *Industrial relations in Nigeria: Theory and features* (3rd Ed.). Lagos: Labofin and Company.
- Ibrahim M.D. & Yakubu O.S. (2017). An analysis of newspaper coverage of Federal Government, Academic Staff Union of Universities crisis in Nigeria. 1 (1), 39-52.
- ICEF (2014). An agent's perceptive on the Nigerian market for study abroad. Available on monitor.icef.com/2014/from-the-field—an-agents-perspective-on-the-nigerian-market-for-study-abroad/
- Infoguidenigeria (2018). Reasons Nigerian students prefer to study in other countries. Available on: infoguidenigeria.com/reasons-why-nigerian-students-prefer-to-study-abroad/
- Ohanmu, O. K. & Fayeye, J. O. (2017). Conflict management in Nigerian school system. In Olubor, R. O., Abdulkareem, A. Y., Alabi, A. T., Adeyanju, F. (eds.). *Educational management: New perspectives*. Nigeria: Amfitop Books.
- Punchng (2020). Ending perennial ASUU strikes requires new funding approach. Available on: <https://www.punchng.com/ending-perennial-ASUU-strikes-requires-new-funding-approach/>
- Uzoh, B. C. (2017). An assessment of the impact of academic staff union of universities (ASUU) on human resource development in Nigerian universities. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7 (4), 740-747.
- Yusuf, F. A. (2017). Student's perception of strike actions on academic performance in Nigeria university: Implications for best practices and counselling. *SMCC Higher Education Research Journal*, 3, 1- 6.