

# Influence of Strike Actions on Attainment of SDGs among Secondary School Students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The incessant strike actions in Nigeria's public and private sectors have become an issue of concern to scholars and policy-makers because industrial peace or conflict impacts the social, political and economic activities of a nation. The present study therefore is focused on the influence of strike actions on attainment of SDGs among secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. Five research questions guided the study. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised all SS 2 science students in all the 62 government-owned secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. A multi-staged sampling approach was used to select 340 SS 2 science students from the zone. A 38-item researcher-structured questionnaire arranged in five clusters was used for data collection. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The result shows among others that strike actions hinder progress of quality education in Awka Education Zone. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that institutions and the government should devise a better way of resolving issues apart from industrial strike.

**Keywords:** Strike actions, sustainable development goals, Awka Education Zone, science students.

## INTRODUCTION

The planet earth and its inhabitants and ecosystems are facing a lot of problems connected with hunger, poverty and others. The extent to which a particular country experiences these problems depends on the country's wealth, its level of education, technological development and so on. A country's level of development depends on how these key issues are sustainably addressed. Sustainable development, according to UNESCO (2005) is a resolution to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future. It is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. In an attempt to achieve this, the UN at its 2012 Rio +20 Earth Summit, itemized the 17 goals called the sustainable development goals out of which goal four placed special emphasis on quality education and reads "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Attaining these goals therefore, should be the concern of all since according to Morgan and O'Shea (2013) sustainable development starts with safe, healthy and well-educated populace.

In line with this, the United Nations listed five critical areas of importance addressable by 2030 to include people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership (5Ps). Education plays a vital role in achieving the SDGs. Recognizing this obvious fact, the UNESCO averred that sustainable development among others involve a change in the way we think and act. This change in attitude can only be attained through quality education. The role of quality and uninterrupted education in achieving the SDGs cannot be overemphasized.

Unfortunately, in Nigeria, incidences of industrial action especially within educational institutions have frequently paralyzed learning at most of our educational institutions. Despite the request for collective bargaining, the incidence continues to get worse. The present study therefore aimed at determining the influence of strike actions on attainment of SDGs among secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. This is the reason for the present study.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study was anchored on conflict theory (CT) rooted in the work of Karl Marx. CT is a theory which examined the ways in which groups disagree, struggle for power and compete for resources such as wealth and prestige. CT shares the basic assumption that no group exists which does not possess conflicts of interest.

Conflict theory according to Nwanze and Akudo (2021) is relevant in analyzing the reality of the Nigeria's education system in that conflict arises when people feel deprived of what they perceive are their fair belongings or rights, which produce a significant or far reaching consequences on the performance and development of their duties. In the case of educational institution staff and their employers, there exist conflict of interests which produces tension. This conflict can be amicably managed and resolved through dialogue which is essential for peace and progress in educational system.

## **METHODS**

The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The design is preferred because, according to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey is a design used to study a group of people or items by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The design is appropriate for the present study because it enables the researcher to collect factual information on the influence of strike actions on attainment of SDGs among secondary school two (SS 2) students in Aba Education Zone of Abia State, Nigeria through questionnaire. The population of the study was all the 8330 SS 2 students in the 119 secondary schools in Aba education zone of Abia State, Nigeria. The sample for the study was 340 SS 2 students selected using multi-stage sampling approach. In the first stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select one local government area from the education zone of which Isiala Ngwa North was selected. Secondly, schools in the selected local government area were stratified according to the number of SS2 students in each of the school. Finally, 5% of SS 2 students in each of the selected school was again randomly picked, making a total of 340 students. The instrument for Data collection was a 38-items researchers - developed instrument arranged in five clusters. Cluster A was a 6-items statement which sought to gather information on how industrial action affects progress of quality education among SS 2 students in Aba education zone of Abia State. Cluster B contains 8 items and sought information on how SS 2 students in Aba education zone were motivated during and after strike actions. Cluster C was an 8-item statement which elicited information on how strike action affected attainment of SDG 4 among SS 2 students in Aba Education Zone of Abia State. Cluster D, 10 items and was used to obtain information on how strike action affected students' learning and information-seeking in Aba education zone of Abia state. Finally, cluster E is a 6-items statement used to collect information on the influence of strike action on quality of teaching in Aba Education Zone of Abia State.

The instrument was validated by three experts; one in Center for Sustainable Development, the other was from Science Education Department while the last was from Department of Education Foundations, all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.73, 0.78, 0.81, 0.88 and 0.77 respectively for clusters A, B, C, D and E. The overall reliability index was 0.79, a value which, according to Nworgu (2015) was adjudged to qualify an instrument as reliable. The instrument was distributed to the respondents by the researchers with the help of four research assistants and were collected on-the-spot to avoid items mortality. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and to ascertain the homogeneity in the respondents' opinions. A 4-point rating scale of strongly agreed (SA) 4 point, agree

(A) 3 point, disagree (D) 2 point and strongly disagree (SD)-1 point was used to elicit response and a criterion mean of 2.50 was obtained. Hence, any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was considered agreed upon while those with mean score less than 2.50 were disagreed upon.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. How does strike actions affect progress towards quality education among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone?
2. How are secondary school students Aba Education Zone motivated during and after strike actions?
3. How does strike actions affect attainment of SDG 4 among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone?
4. How does strike actions affect students' learning and information seeking in in Aba Education Zone?
5. What is the influence of strike actions on quality of teaching in Aba Education Zone?

## RESULTS

The collected data were analyzed and the result presented as shown in line with the research questions

### Research Question 1

How does strike actions affect progress towards quality education among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone?

Table 1: How strike actions affect progress towards quality education among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone

S/N	Items	N	SA	A	D	SD	X	$\sigma$	Remarks
1	Students lose interest in serious and meaningful academic pursuit	340	98	151	78	12	2.98	0.95	Agree
2	Strike interferes with the quality of Education	340	340	0	0	0	4	0.62	Agree
3	It makes students lose interest in furthering their studies	340	94	116	98	32	2.8	1.02	Agree
4	It interrupts school activities, thus making it difficult for teachers to cover their scheme of work	340	130	124	48	38	3.02	1.33	Agree
5	It does not permit real involvement of students in science and vocational courses in practical work, and so produces quack technicians	340	164	111	46	19	3.24	0.99	Agree
6	Due to frequent strike action, Nigerian students cannot compete with their international counterparts	340	76	89	122	53	2.55	0.76	Agree
7	Students produced during and after strike action exhibit low self-esteem	340	87	92	95	66	2.59	0.88	Agree
8	They lack adequate concept knowledge	340	75	98	81	86	2.48	0.87	Disagree
	<b>Mean of means</b>						<b>2.96</b>		

The result in Table 1 shows that the respondents agree to the items of the questionnaire that strike actions affect progress towards quality education among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone in accordance with the item statements. This is because, all the listed items have mean scores greater than 2.50 with mean of means of 2.96.

### Research Question 2

How are secondary school students in Aba Education Zone motivated during and after strike actions?

Table 2: respondents' mean ratings on how secondary school students in Aba Education Zone are motivated during and after strike actions

S/N	Items	N	SA	A	D	SD	X	$\sigma$	Remarks
1	During strike, students always sleep at home	340	115	98	30	97	2.67	0.78	Agree
2	During strike, students indulge in dirty activities like rape and stealing	340	102	141	84	14	2.98	0.93	Agree
3	After strike, as a student, I feel like discontinuing with education	340	265	53	20	2	3.71	0.67	Agree
4	Strike action affects my academic achievement negatively	340	59	76	78	127	2.2	0.76	Disagree
5	Strike action makes me lose interest in studying	340	102	174	41	23	3.04	1.22	Agree
6	Strike action leaves me less motivated to study harder	340	182	84	44	30	3.23	0.84	Agree
	<b>Mean of Means</b>						<b>2.97</b>		Agree

Data in Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed with all the item statements except item 4, hence they agree that during and after strike actions, students were less motivated to continue on their academic pursuit. The conclusion is drawn from the fact that the respondents had mean scores of 2.50 and above for all the items except item number 4 which has a mean score of 2.20. However, the mean of mean of 2.97 which is higher than the cut-off point of 2.50 led to the conclusion that the respondents were of the opinion that during and after strike actions, they were less motivated.

### Research Question 3

How does strike actions affect attainment of SDG 4 among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone?

Table 3: how strike actions affect attainment of SDG 4 among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone

S/N	Items	N	SA	A	D	SD	X	$\sigma$	Remarks
1	During strike, most students drop out of school, thus reducing the number of people that continues with education	340	55	200	61	24	2.84	0.99	Agree
2	Strike makes students lose interest in studying for excellence	340	225	110	5	0	3.65	0.66	Agree
3	During strike, students engage in other non-academic ventures which affect their performance in school	340	260	48	20	12	3.64	1.43	Agree
4	Strike action leads to many students dropping out of school	340	133	153	12	42	3.11	0.72	Agree
5	Strike action hinders academic excellence among students as programmes are rushed over	340	320	20	0	0	3.94	0.96	Agree
6	It leads students to play truancy	340	161	113	32	34	3.18	1.12	Agree
7	It makes some students lazy and not focused on their academic endeavors	340	83	92	90	75	2.54	1.01	Agree

8	Strikes result in some students abandoning their programmes	340	300	24	16	0	3.84	0.91	Agree
	<b>Mean of Means</b>						<b>3.34</b>		Agree

Observing Table 3, it can be shown that the respondents all agree with all the item statements, hence they all agree that strike actions negatively affect attainment of SDG 4 among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone. The conclusion is drawn from the fact that a mean score of 2.50 and above was obtained for all the item statements with a mean of means of 3.34 which is very much higher than the cut-off point of 2.50.

#### Research Question 4

How does strike actions affect students' learning and information seeking in in Aba Education Zone?

Table 4: how strike actions affect students' learning and information seeking in Aba Education Zone

S/N	Items	N	SA	A	D	SD	X	$\sigma$	Remarks
1	Strike action leads to a decrease in research and innovation	340	42	54	106	138	2	0.91	Disagree
2	During strike, government diverts resources that could have been used in developing schools to resolving strike conflicts	340	173	156	11	0	2.89	0.78	Agree
3	Strike action lowers staff output in schools	340	159	105	46	30	3.16	1.03	Agree
4	There is a decrease in academic activities, thus stifling information seeking and gathering	340	280	60	0	0	3.82	1.11	Agree
5	It makes students engage in examination malpractices	340	38	67	132	103	2.12	0.78	Disagree
6	It destabilizes the school programme and its operations, leading to tertiary institutions churning out half-baked graduates	340	94	124	82	40	2.81	1.4	Agree
7	It leads to low staff output	340	72	130	65	73	2.59	0.99	Agree
8	It increases the length of students' stay on campus	340	340	0	0	0	4	0.59	Agree
9	It increases substance abuse among students	340	88	141	56	55	2.77	1.22	Agree
10	It increases students' involvement in kidnapping and financial crimes	340	194	80	30	39	3.28	0.81	Agree
	<b>Mean of Means</b>						<b>2.94</b>		Agree

Observing Table 4, it can be seen that the respondents agree with all the item statements, hence they all agree that strike actions negatively affect students' learning and information seeking in Aba Education Zone. The conclusion is drawn from the fact that the respondents agree with all the item statements with the exception of only item numbers 1 and 5 whose cut off points are less than 2.50 which is the criterion mean. The mean of means of 3.94 is also greater than 2.50, the criterion mean.

#### Research Question 5

What is the influence of strike actions on quality of teaching in Aba Education Zone?

Table 5: mean ratings of students' responses on influence of strike actions on quality of teaching in Aba Education Zone

S/N	Items	N	SA	A	D	SD	X	$\sigma$	Remarks
1	It makes teachers less committed to teaching	340	96	88	73	83	2.58	1.03	Agree
2	Teachers are no longer interested in preparing well for their lesson periods	340	66	79	74	121	2.27	0.84	Disagree



3	Teachers and students engage in alternative means of livelihood, disrupting regular lessons	340	111	54	74	101	2.51	1.11	Agree
4	Teachers' attention is diverted to other affairs outside their primary assignment	340	151	76	49	64	3.51	1.35	Agree
5	ASUU strikes make teachers see quality teaching as a non-rewarding venture	340	71	193	52	24	2.91	0.78	Agree
6	After strikes, academic activities are highly rushed and done haphazardly to catch up	340	198	61	36	45	3.21	0.88	Agree
<b>Mean of Means</b>							<b>2.83</b>		Agree

From Table 5, it is observed that all the respondents are of the opinion that strike actions have adverse influence on quality of teaching in Aba Education Zone. In the Table, all item statements are agreed upon with mean of 2.50 and above and a criterion mean of 2.83 which is also higher than the cut-off mean of 2.50

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the study were discussed as shown and in line with the research questions. Research question 1 sought information on how strike actions affected progress towards quality education among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone. The respondents agreed to the items of the questionnaire that strike actions adversely affected progress towards quality education among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone. This is because, all the listed items had mean scores greater than 2.50 with mean of means of 2.96. The finding is in agreement with that of Mohammed and Hammangabdo (2022) who observed that industrial actions disrupted the academic calendar and undermined the quality of teaching, learning and general level of academic performance with implication for the social, economic and psychological stability of the students.

Research question 2 was directed to generate Data on how secondary school students in Aba Education Zone are motivated during and after strike actions. Data in Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed with all the item statements except item 4, hence they agree that during and after strike actions, students were less motivated to continue on their academic pursuit. The conclusion is drawn from the fact that the respondents had mean scores of 2.50 and above for all the items except item number 4 which has a mean score of 2.20. However, the mean of mean of 2.97 which is higher than the cut-off point of 2.50 led to the conclusion that the respondents were of the opinion that during and after strike actions, they were less motivated. The findings of the present study are in line with that of Edinyang and Ubi (2013) who posited that disruption of academic programme as caused by strike action breeds disappointment, frustration, emotional and psychological trauma, unpreparedness on the part of the students and lack of motivation which sum up to non-conducive environment for effective learning

The essence of research 3 was to elicit Data on how strike actions affects attainment of SDG 4 among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone. Observing Table 3, it can be shown that the respondents all agree with all the item statements, hence they all agree that strike actions negatively affect attainment of SDG 4 among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone. The conclusion is drawn from the fact that the respondents agree with all the item statements having mean scores of 2.50 and above for each and a mean of means of 3.34 which is very much higher than the cut-off point of 2.50. The finding agrees with that of Lawrence, Ihebuzor and Lawrence (2020). These authors reported that poor funding of education in the budget, out-of-school-children (often as a result of strike action), and poor school infrastructure among others are factors that militate against achievement of SDG 4 in developing countries, especially in Nigeria

Research question 4 was posed to gather information on how strike actions affects students' learning and information seeking in Aba Education Zone. Observing Table 4, it can be seen that the respondents agree with all the item statements, hence they all agree that strike actions negatively affect students' learning and information seeking in Aba Education Zone because during strike, government divert the resources that

could have been used in developing schools and equipping the libraries to resolving strike conflicts; and there is decrease in academic activities thus stifling information seeking and gathering. The conclusion is drawn from the fact that the respondents agree with all the item statements with the exception of item numbers 1 and 5 whose cut off points are less than 2.50 which is the criterion mean. The mean of means of 3.94 is also greater than 2.50, the criterion mean. The result was supported by that of Albar and Onye (2016) who reported that strike actions deprives students access to their primary information source on campus (and of course in schools thus having negative impact on students' learning; hence, producing un-educated university graduates.

Research question 5 was meant to obtain data on the influence of strike actions on quality of teaching in Aba Education Zone. From the result presented in the Table, it is observed that all the respondents are of the opinion that strike actions have adverse influence on quality of teaching in Aba Education Zone because all item statements are agreed upon with mean of 2.50 and above and a mean of mean of 2.83 which is also higher than the cut-off mean of 2.50. In line with the finding of this study was that reported by Egwu (2018) stating that strike actions affects students' performance in examinations and make them engage in examination malpractice, destabilizing the school programme and its operation including quality of teaching among others.

## CONCLUSION

The result of the present study has shown that attainment of sustainable development goal among secondary school students in Aba Education Zone has been adversely affected by strike action. As a result of consistent strike action, the quality of students being churned out of our secondary schools yearly has been below the needed standard. Hence, gaining admission into tertiary institutions becomes a problem for many of them.

Again, it was observed that during and after strike actions, secondary school students become poorly motivated to continue with academic pursuit and so they become less interested in studying further, hence, many of them end up being school drop outs. This leads to some of them getting involved in desiccant behaviours and posing a great problem for the society.

Attainment of SDG 4 becomes highly impossible due to constant strike actions since people do not see the gain in going to school when those that were already educated were not gainfully employed. Students also during strike become less interested to learn and seek information since they were denied access to the library and other facilities which are their main information source.

Finally, poor quality of teaching become evident during and after strike actions. This is because, teachers during strike actions has been committed to alternative means if coping which becomes difficult for them to get disengaged with.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations has been proffered:

1. Both government and institutions should devise a better way of resolving issues apart from industrial strikes.
2. Government should provide additional communication channels so as to have regular communication with the teachers.
3. Government should provide employment opportunity for graduates of tertiary institutions to motivate and encourage younger students to pursue academic professions.
4. Government should make sure that workers are regularly promoted and that their salaries and allowances are paid as when due

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