

Volume 7, Issue No.2, pp 52-79, April, 2026

www.researchersjournal.org

E-Mail: jahadsresearch@gmail.com

info@researchersjournal.org

Received February, 2026, Accepted April, 2026, published: April, 2026

ASUU–Federal Government Industrial Disputes and External Efficiency of University Education in Nigeria: Evidence from National Youth Service Corps Members in Cross River State

¹Amoramo, John Davis & ²Umoh, Roseline Aniekan.

¹*Department of Educational Management, University of Calabar, Calabar- Nigeria,*

johnamoramo@gmail.com; +2348160938989

²*Department of Psychology, Guidance & Counselling, Clifford University Owerinta, Abia State- Nigeria, umohroseline03@gmail.com ; +2348161291841*

Abstract

The study assessed ASUU–Federal Government Industrial Disputes and External Efficiency of University Education in Nigeria drawing evidence from National Youth Service Corps Members in Cross River State. Correlation research design was used for the study. The population of the study was 1,501 batch A stream 2 corps members posted to Cross River State for 2026 service year. Cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used for the study. A sample of 900 respondents was generously drawn using Yamane sample determination formula. The instrument was administered on the sample in their orientation camp at Obubra LGA of Cross River State. Out of which 890 questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis. The researcher-developed instrument titled: ASUU-Federal Government Impasse and External Efficiency of University Education Questionnaire (AGIEFUEQ) employed for data collection was validated by three experts in Departments of Educational Management, Educational Psychology and Economics of University of Calabar, Calabar in order to ensure its face and content validation of the drafted copy. The instrument contained 21 items (seven for irregular academic calendar, brain drain and external efficiency respectively) developed on a Likert four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. A trial test was conducted on comparable population in Anambra State, Nigeria. The data collected were subjected to measure of internal consistency using Cronbach alpha which yielded the reliability index of .80 and .84 for the sub-scales. The data collected from the field was analyzed using simple linear regression at .05 level of significance with the aid of Special Package for Social Sciences version 23. The results showed significant prediction of irregular academic calendar and brain drain individually and jointly on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the Federal Government should honour any agreement reached with ASUU by previous Government(s) in order to guide against industrial disharmony which breeds irregular academic calendar with its attendant effect on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.

Keywords: ASUU-Federal Government Industrial Disputes, External Efficiency, University Education, Nigeria.

Introduction

University education plays a fundamental role in the development of any society, whether developed or developing. This is because universities serve as important centres for advanced knowledge creation, skill development, critical thinking, and the preparation of future leaders who contribute to social, economic, scientific, and technological advancement. Through teaching, research, and community engagement, universities promote innovation and provide the intellectual foundation required for national development (Ali-Ega & Alumode, 2026). It is a citadel of knowledge for learning and quality research were the future giant are build. For Bagonza, 2015; Qutb, 2016; Adamu, *et al.*, (2017), university education leads to the acquisition of productive skills, knowledge and other attributes which are of economics value not only to individuals who get high life time earnings, but also to nations which benefit in terms of growth in Growth Domestic Product (GDP).

In the university system, however, there are two recognized categories of workers/ staff via; Academic staff and non-academic staff. Academic staff is the members of the teaching staff of the university. Like every other organization, the academic staff has their own union body that fights for the welfare of their members and change in the university system. This union is called the Academic Staff Union of the university (ASUU) (Elite Project Writers, 2020). Academic Staff Union of the university (ASUU) was a subset of the Nigerian Association of university teacher formed in 1965. Academic Staff Union of the university (ASUU) gain autonomy in 1978 and began to operate as a union that fights for the right of her members. The union is further saddled with the responsibility of assisting the stakeholder in attaining the aimed classic standard of education through the provision of quality education in the Nigerian university system. Further, the union also supports the struggle just like another union to ensure adequate welfare of her member, job security for her member and facilitate enabling working environment for her member (Elite Project Writers, 2020).

External efficiency of university education reflects the extent to which graduates possess relevant skills, competencies, and employability attributes required for national development and

labour market productivity. In Nigeria, however, the realization of these objectives has been undermined by persistent industrial disputes between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government. These disputes have frequently resulted in prolonged strike actions, irregular academic calendars, disruption of teaching and learning activities, and the migration of experienced academics to foreign institutions.

The recurrent disruptions in university operations have generated concerns among stakeholders regarding the quality of graduates produced by Nigerian universities and their preparedness for the global labour market. In addition, brain drain has continued to weaken the capacity of universities to deliver quality instruction, research, and mentorship necessary for sustainable national development. Despite several studies on ASUU strike actions, limited empirical attention has been paid to how irregular academic calendar and brain drain jointly predict the external efficiency of university education. It is against this background that this study examined the predictive influence of ASUU–Federal Government impasse on the external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.

Concept of External Efficiency

External efficiency refers to how well a system's outputs meet the needs of the broader environment. In economics and education, it measures whether the skills, products, or services produced by a system actually create value, drive productivity, and satisfy societal or market demands. For Besong (2014), efficiency refers to the relationship between the inputs into a system and the outputs from that system. A system or an activity is said to be efficient if it can produce maximum output with a given quality of inputs or a given quantity of output with the minimum quantity of inputs.

However, external efficiency in university education refers to the extent to which graduates meet the demands of the labour market and contribute meaningfully to economic productivity (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). It goes beyond internal measures like graduation rates to assess how well the education system translates learning into tangible outcomes in employment and income. In the Nigerian context, ASUU-Federal Government disputes that disrupt academic

calendars and research directly weaken this external efficiency, and the effects show up in five key areas.

First, employability depends on the timely completion of programmes and the acquisition of relevant skills. When strikes extend the duration of study and reduce contact hours, graduates enter the labor market later and often with skill gaps (Adeyemi & Osiki, 2022). Employers in Nigeria have reported preference for graduates from private universities with uninterrupted calendars, indicating that instability reduces the perceived employability of public university graduates.

Second, job performance is tied to the depth of training received. Interruptions from prolonged strikes break the continuity of learning, limit practical exposure, and reduce students' engagement with lecturers (Okebukola, 2021). Teachers Institute (2026) stated that external efficiency examines how well the outputs of education – the skills, knowledge, and qualifications of graduates – align with the economic and social needs of the world outside the classroom. An education system can graduate students on time and within budget and still fail in terms of external efficiency if those graduates cannot find relevant employment or contribute meaningfully to the economy. Hence, NYSC members who experience these disruptions often report difficulty adapting to workplace tasks that require applied knowledge, suggesting lower on-the-job competence.

Third, graduate productivity reflects how quickly and effectively graduates contribute to organizational goals. External efficiency is low when graduates require extensive retraining or take longer to reach full productivity (World Bank, 2023). In Nigeria, repeated industrial actions have been linked to graduates lacking research experience and problem-solving skills, which reduces their immediate contribution to employers.

Fourth, labour market relevance concerns the alignment between university curricula and industry needs. ASUU disputes often stall curriculum reviews and partnerships with industry, leaving graduates with outdated knowledge (Nwoke & Okoro, 2020). Teachers Institute (2026) further stressed that Skills mismatch is one of the most concrete indicators of poor external

efficiency. It occurs when the qualifications or competencies of graduates do not align with the needs of employers. The core challenge of external efficiency is ensuring that what education systems produce matches what economies actually need. Over-education, where graduates hold qualifications far above what their jobs require, leads to underutilization of skills and reduced productivity. Under-education, conversely, generates skill gaps that restrict job performance and economic output.

This mismatch means many graduates are not absorbed into sectors that match their training, lowering the external efficiency of the system. In the same vein, income level serves as an economic indicator of external efficiency. Human capital theory predicts that higher quality education leads to higher earnings, but Nigerian studies show that graduates affected by frequent strikes earn less in their first five years of work compared to peers with uninterrupted education (Babalola et al., 2022). This income penalty reflects the market’s valuation of disrupted and lower-quality training.

Similarly, ensuring external efficiency, there is a need to building stronger feedback loops between education systems and labour markets. This means regularly updating curricula in collaboration with industry, expanding vocational and technical education pathways, and investing in career guidance that helps students make informed choices about fields of study. This emphasize that improved alignment between education and workforce demands is critical to fostering inclusive economic growth – and that this requires both policy reform and institutional commitment to lifelong learning (Teachers Institute, 2026).

Therefore, universities would be externally efficient when graduates get appropriate employment, earn higher wages compared to their counterparts with lower qualifications, and university education is making a significant contribution to national wealth (Bagonza, 2015). In this study, external efficiency refers to the extent to which university graduates possess employable skills, demonstrate workplace productivity, and satisfy labour market expectations. This can be achieved when there is a harmonious relationship between ASUU and the Federal government.

ASUU–Government Industrial Disputes

The disagreement between the ASUU and government is always justified by the former as a necessary step in advancing the education sector development. While it is incontrovertible that education is the bridge connecting generations for sustainability and improvement of recorded development, but connecting this reality with the ASUU strike for educational growth seems irreconcilable. Moreover, since education prepares the young generation for tractable incremental successes, it is expedient to review ASUU activities and her guiding principles. Furthermore, because the government-ASUU impasse is almost becoming part of the academic activity in Nigeria, one is sceptical to believe that ASUU's national development ambition is more than a cosmetic objective. The repeated suspension of academic activities by ASUU in the Ivory Towers remains a national concern, making a review of agreements and demands a continuous exercise (Chukwudi & Idowu, 2021). According to Ogunode, Okweloga, and Abubakar (2022), some of the major demands raised by ASUU during strike actions include the revitalization of public universities, implementation of agreed salary structures, improved research funding, payment of outstanding allowances, and reforms aimed at strengthening the governance of universities.

Consequently, a number of the strike has been undertaken by ASUU totalling 15 from 1999. The details of the strike according to Yusuf (2020) include: 1999- five months; 2001- three months; 2002- two weeks; 2003/2004- six months; 2005- three days; 2006- three days; 2007- three months; 2008 - one week; 2009- four months; 2010- over five months; 2011/2012- three months; 2013- over five months; 2017- three weeks; 2018/2019 - two months; 2020 - nine months, it seems safe to infer that both the ASUU and the government interests are far from being nationalistic or stakeholders' centred. Elite Project Writers (2020) further stressed that the 2017 ASUU strike occurred due to Government failure to comply with already signed agreements and memorandum of understanding (MoU) in 2009 and 2013.

Irregular Academic Calendar and Educational Outcomes

Frequent strike actions in universities can significantly disrupt the academic activities of students and staff. Students' academic performance, in particular, may be adversely affected by prolonged interruptions in the academic calendar (Ali-Ega & Alumode, 2026). According to Hassan and Sa'adu (2024), academic performance can be measured through indicators such as grade point averages, examination results, retention rates, and successful completion of academic programmes. Beyond these measurable indicators, academic performance also involves the development of critical thinking abilities, professional competencies, and lifelong learning skills that prepare students for productive participation in society (Nwagbala, Okafor, & Ani, 2022).

Besides, students of public universities are always crestfallen and frustrated because of the elongation of their duration of study period arising from too many strike actions of ASUU. The unfavourable environment for qualitative learning often dampens human resourcefulness making student graduation with an excellent Grade Point Average (GPA) difficult or almost impossible (Doublegist, 2013; Alfa, *et al.*, 2024). Additionally, students are increasingly becoming disinterested in academics; prefer to continue doing menial jobs to returning for learning; and, forget most of the acquired knowledge due to a prolonged stay out of school occasioned by strikes (Etodike, 2020; Alabi 2019).

Also, strike action usually prolongs students' academic years and most of the students end up missing the Federal Government compulsory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme as a result of over age. Also, while other students begin their second degree or master's degree at age 22, some Nigerian students are not sure of obtaining a first degree even at age 30 majorly due to incessant strike actions and lack of proper funding of the universities to be able to admit a large number of students. Medical, Law as well as final year students faces the greatest impact of strike actions in Nigeria which affects law school, horsemanship and degree examinations respectively (Ugar, 2018).

Consequently, the impasse between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the governments in Nigeria (state and federal) manifested in a repeated ASUU strikes, having implications on students and society in the contemporary changing world (Chukwudi & Idowu,

2021). Meanwhile, Elite Project Writers (2020) maintained that all this industrial action has disrupted the academics activities of the university for years while the quality of education ditched to students is half-baked. The academic performance of students is getting poorer every session due to incessant industrial action of the Academic Staff Union of the university (ASUU).

Indeed, Nigerian public universities today suffer from irregular academic calendar, poor quality teaching facilities, decay of amenities and infrastructure reflecting in low quality graduates, substandard research output and unqualified students, who are ill-equipped for the labour market. These problems in the nation's ivory tower seem to be an impediment in fulfilling the realization of the goals for establishing the universities (Akinaso, 2017). The reoccurring nature of industrial unrest which ASUU uses as a tool to correct these anomalies in public universities impinges on the ethos of academic excellence thereby making the Nigerian public universities an objects of caricature (Elite Project Writers, 2020). Regrettably, The frequent strikes have particularly impacted technical education students who are required to demonstrate proficiency in technical skills upon completion. The alteration of academic calendars to accommodate strikes disrupts the teaching and learning processes, leading to elongated school years and rushed curriculum coverage. This rush contributes to a poorer mastery of the profession (Egbebi and Iheriohamma, 2019).

A good academic calendar ensures smooth running of academic activities. It also enhances academic performance of in the universities and creates conducive learning atmosphere for students. An academic calendar is very important for teaching and learning, because it guides the planned activities of universities. The success or failure of any teaching and learning process also depends on the way academic calendar is planned and managed. However, it has been observed over the years that the academic calendar of the University lasts for two and half months with rushed activities. As a result, it seems to decrease the average student credit hour load and an increase in the percentage of students' withdrawal from a programme. The aberration has inflicted on university a siege mentality with its damaging effects on the grade of degrees they offer. The lecturers are also overloaded with teaching, conduct of research and marking of examinations

scripts. The cases of missing scripts are traced to compressed academic calendar (Ugosor, Joseph, & Isah, 2025).

Brain Drain and University Performance

The strike cycle is a primary push factor in Nigeria's academic brain drain. According to Iloka and Eze (2022), early-career and mid-career academics, witnessing the instability and financial strain, actively seek opportunities abroad or in private sectors. This exodus is not just a loss of bodies; it is a depletion of institutional memory, specialized expertise, and research continuity. Departments are left with aging professors and inexperienced graduate assistants, creating a "missing generation" that threatens the sustainability of academic disciplines (Olukoshi, 2021).

Unfortunately, Nigerian universities have long been confronted with the challenge of brain drain, which refers to the loss of high skilled and educated individuals to opportunities abroad. This phenomenon not only depletes the intellectual capital of the nation but also affects the quality of education and research in local universities (Ebeta & Dike, 2024). In the same vein, Mallo, Benjamin and Buba (2023) opined that poor quality of Tertiary education in Nigeria is also linked to the problem of mass exodus of professionals out of the Tertiary education system to other part of the world due to poor motivation. Thus, inadequate funding, lack of strategic manpower planning, uncondusive working environment and corruption as the reasons for shortage of academic staff in the Nigerian Tertiary institutions. The resultant effect is poor academic performance of the student because the academic staff are not enough to effectively supervise their academic work.

More so, in Nigeria, universities suffer from a shortage of lecturers in all programmes. Moreover, current university lecturers intend to migrate due to the ineffective implementation of the current federal government- ASUU agreement reached in 2009, the presence of internal and external conflicts and the lack of resources to support research also necessitated for brain drain. Therefore, the problem of brain drain weakens the quality of university education programmes in

the country (Muthanna & Sang, 2018). Corroborating, Baridam and Don-Baridam (2020) regretted that the bad news is that while the benefitting countries of brain drain continue to improve their skilled manpower base, the victim countries, such as Nigeria, continue to suffer from specialized manpower deficit on all fronts.

Empirically, Ali-Ega and Alumode (2026) examined the Impact of Frequent Strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities on University Education in South East Nigeria. Four research questions and four null hypotheses were formulated and guided the study. The population of the study was 7,240 academic staff and students (803 academic staff and 6437 final year students) of Faculty of Education. The sample size of the study was 362 respondents drawn through proportionate sampling techniques. The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed questionnaire titled, 'Impact of Frequent Strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASSU) on University Education Questionnaire (IFASUEQ). The Questionnaire was validated by three lecturers: two from the Department of Educational Foundations (Administration and Planning option), and one from the Department of Science Education (Measurement and Evaluation option), all in the Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha technique with the aid of SPSS which yielded an overall index of 0.64.

Mean and standard deviation was used to answer research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested using independent sample t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that frequent strikes negatively impact on students' academic performance as it affects students' intellectual ability and increase lack of exposure to practical **skills** among other; that the impact of ASUU strikes on staff welfare indicates that universities experience lack of staff training during strike actions but gives room for adequate job security. Based on these findings, the study recommended among other things that government and university authorities should establish a sustainable dialogue and conflict resolution mechanism with ASUU to ensure that issues relating to staff welfare, funding, and working conditions are addressed promptly before they escalate into prolonged strike actions that disrupt academic programmes.

Further, Ugosor, Joseph and Isah (2025) examine the effect of compressed academic calendar on the academic performance of students of University Abuja, Nigeria. Five objectives were set and four research questions were answered. The study adopted a correlational research design. Population for the study was 146 comprising 21 lecturers and 125 students of Agricultural science education programme in the department of science and environmental education, University of Abuja and was used for the study as sample because the population size. Data was analysed using percentages, mean, standard deviation, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and t-test statistics. The study found out a relationship between compressed academic calendar and work load of students and lecturers ($t = 0.221 > 0.05$). Also, the study found a positive relationship between compressed academic calendar and students' withdrawal from a programme ($r = 0.221 > 0.05$). Results of the findings reviewed a positive relationship between compressed academic calendar and examination malpractices ($r = 0.340 > 0.05$).

Finally, the study found a significant relationship between compressed academic calendar and damaging effects on the grade of degrees ($r = 0.319 > 0.05$). The study concluded that compressed academic calendar, even though found ideal for the university management and contain the same materials as a full-length semester is generally regarded as less effective for students and lecturers, and hence, lead to poor students' performance. It was recommended that university management should ensure that adequate provision of resources and logistics needed to enhance good academic achievement of students undergoing a study in a compressed calendar. The lecturers in the university should be provided with incentives and other logistics needed for effective teaching process in order to encourage them work hard in a compressed academic calendar. Schedule of academic activities should be made in such a manner that students are not discouraged to study but prepare well for all examinations. The university management should ensure implementation of full and long semesters in order to run smooth academic activities.

In addition, Chukwudi and Idowu (2021) examined ASUU strike and the Nigerian governments: implications on students and society in a changing world. With the secondary sourced data from journals, newspapers, journals, books and the internet while underpinning the

research with the social contract theory. The study discovered that the strikes are orchestrated largely by the union quest to protect its members' welfare and swift greeting of any perceived unfriendly steps by the government with strike actions while the government fell short in funding and entrenching a right legal milieu for negotiation and regulation of ASUU. The study concludes that the public university students are exposed and tempted to indulge in social vices, have a sense of being disadvantaged unlike their private colleagues, and the society developmental agenda is threatened because of the poor quality of graduates produced from the Ivory Tower. It recommends that government and ASUU should renegotiate their agreements while the former should also ramp up the budgetary funding allocation to the University amongst others

From this perspective, Godknows and Oyinmiebi (2024) surveyed ASUU-Federal government disputes and its impact on university education in Nigeria. This article derived its data basically from secondary sources of material from textbooks, journal article, newspaper, through qualitative systematic content analysis, using a theoretical framework of Hegelian dialectics as tool for analysis. One major finding of this study is that there is soured relationship between FGN and ASUU since 1980s due to genuine demands and have resulted into prolonged strikes, which adversely affected graduates practical skills, attitudes, and knowledge related to occupations in different sectors of economic and social life in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Ebete and Dike (2024) investigated managing brain drain for students' academic performance in nigerian universities: A case study of Rivers State. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses guided the study. A sample size of 348 academic staff was drawn from the three universities in Rivers State, using stratified sampling technique. A structured 12-item instrument titled managing brain drain for students' academic performance questionnaire (MBDSAPQ) was used for data collection. The test re-test method was used to obtain reliability of the instrument. The reliability index was established at 0.73. The mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions and Z-test was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that the causes of brain drain in Nigerian universities are economic incentives, motivation, funding. Brain drain causes loss of talented lecturers, reduction

of the standard of education and the ways of managing brain drain are better salaries, collaboration with international universities for knowledge exchange. The study inter alia recommended that government should ensure that lecturers are well paid, provide grants to lecturers for quality research and partner with private sectors.

Similarly, a study on managing the socio-economic effects of lecturers brain drain for sustainable university education in Rivers State was under taken by Eseyin and Wagbara (2023). Four research questions and corresponding hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design with 3, 806 teaching staff in the public universities in Rivers State constituting the study population out of which 390 respondents (94 females and 296 males) were sampled using convenience sampling technique. A 30-item questionnaire was deployed for data collection and was face and content validated by experts while the reliability index of 0.89 was estimated using Cronbach Alpha statistics. There were 369 copies of the questionnaire retrieved. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that migration of lecturers to other countries leads to social and economic crises Such as increased burnout, shortage of skilled workers, dependence on other Universities, reduction in the academic labour force, educational inequalities which can affect the delivery of quality University education.

In another empirical study, Toryuha (2024) investigated stakeholders' perception of causes and consequences of the academic staff union of universities strike among public universities in Nigeria: 1999-2022. The study employed the descriptive survey method. The population of the study comprised all the 91 public universities in Nigeria. The sample of the study was 400 stakeholders, comprising of lecturers, students, parents, transporters and marketers in 12 public universities in Nigeria who were selected using multistage sampling procedure of purposive and simple random sampling at their respective public universities. A self-designed questionnaire titled; Stakeholders' perception of prevalence, causes and consequences of ASUU strike among public universities in Nigeria: 1999- 2022 (SPCCASPUN). The questionnaire was on a 5-point Likert scale containing 24 items, validated by experts and reliability of .87 was obtained using a

split-half method. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics of mean rating, percentage and t-test. Findings of the study among others revealed that the poor budgetary allocation to the education sector, failure of the federal government to honour their long-term agreement, staff bonuses, the politicization of the ASUU strike and revitalization of universities are the causes of ASUU strike. The consequences include loss of interest in school due to increased social vices, the rush od academic programmes, missing out on NYSC and other job opportunities, and loss of sponsorship. It was concluded that both the government and ASUU should come to terms to resolve the issue once and for all to avoid future reoccurrence.

Theoretical Framework

This study was structured within ambit of Human Capital Theory which was propounded by Theodore W. Schultz in 1961 and further developed by Gary S. Becker in 1964 (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964). The core assumption of the theory is that investment in education, training, and health increases the knowledge, skills, and productivity of individuals, which in turn raises their earnings and contributes to economic growth. The implication of the theory for this study is that disruptions caused by ASUU-Federal Government industrial disputes, such as irregular academic calendars and brain drain, reduce the stock of human capital produced by Nigerian universities. This leads to graduates with lower skills and delayed entry into the labour market, thereby lowering external efficiency. The theory is relevant to the study because it provides a framework for understanding how instability in the university system undermines the role of higher education in building human capital, as experienced and reported by National Youth Service Corps members in Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

The aim of the study was to find out the prediction of ASUU–Federal Government industrial disputes and external efficiency of university education in Nigeria: Evidence from National Youth Service Corps Members in Cross River State. Specifically, the study aimed at finding out the prediction of:

1. The influence of irregular academic calendar on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.
2. Brain drain on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.
3. ASUU–Federal Government industrial disputes on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.

Research questions

The following posers guided the study:

- To what extent does irregular academic calendar predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria?
- To what extent does brain drain predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria?
- To what extent do ASUU–Federal government industrial disputes (irregular academic calendar, and brain drain) jointly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria?

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. Irregular academic calendar does not significantly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.
2. Brain drain does not significantly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.
3. ASUU–Federal government industrial disputes (irregular academic calendar, and brain drain) do not jointly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.

Research Methodology

Correlation research design was used for the study. This design is apt since the study sought to obtain data from respondents so as to predict ASUU-Federal Government industrial

disputes on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria. The study was delimited to Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 1,501 batch A stream 2 corps members posted to Cross River State for 2026 service year (National Youth Service Corp, Calabar, 2026). The study used a combination of cluster and simple random sampling to select 900 Corps members from the 1,501 posted to Obubra orientation camp. First, cluster sampling was applied by treating the camp's platoons as natural groups or clusters. This made the selection process practical, since Corps members are organized and managed in platoons for accommodation, drills, and other camp activities.

Rather than trying to track individuals scattered across the camp, the researchers worked through these existing clusters. Within these clusters, simple random sampling was then used to choose the actual participants. Each of the 1,501 Corps members was assigned a number, and 900 numbers were randomly picked without replacement using a random number table or computer generator. This ensured that every Corps member had an equal chance of being included, regardless of platoon. The result was a sample of 900 that was both logistically feasible to access and statistically unbiased, reflecting the broader population of Corps members at the camp that was generously drawn using Yamane (1967) sample determination formula.

The researchers-developed instrument titled: ASUU-Federal Government Industrial Disputes and External Efficiency of University Education Questionnaire (AGIDEEUEQ) was employed for data collection. The instrument contained 21 items with ASUU-Federal Government Industrial Disputes (irregular academic calendar and brain drain having seven items each) and external efficiency containing seven items also; developed on a Likert four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with weight 4, 3, 2 and 1 for all strongly worded items and weight 1, 2, 3 and 4 for all negatively worded items respectively as respondents were instructed to select the options that best reflected their experience. Some items examples included: Frequent ASUU strikes often make the university academic calendar unpredictable; Students rarely spend more years in school than the official duration of their programmes as a result of disruptions; the frequent strikes hardly discourage young scholars from pursuing

academic careers in Nigeria; ASUU-FG disputes regularly contribute to the migration of experienced academics out of the country; Graduates from my university rarely possess the skills needed by employers; University education currently meets the manpower needs of the Nigerian economy.

In order to ensure face and content validation of the instrument, the drafted copy was presented to three experts who are lecturers in Departments of Educational Management, Educational Psychology and Economics of University of Calabar, Calabar. A trial test was conducted on comparable population in Anambra State, Nigeria. The data collected were subjected to measure of internal consistency using Cronbach alpha which yielded the reliability index of .80, .82 and .84 respectively for the sub-scales. The instrument was administered on the sample in their orientation camp at Obubra LGA of Cross River State. Out of which 890 questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis with 10 not returned.

However, ethical approval for the study was obtained from the NYSC Directorate, Cross River State Office prior to data collection. After which, informed consent was secured from corps members at the Obubra orientation camp in Cross River State after the purpose of the study and their rights were explained. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring anonymity and using the data strictly for academic purposes. The data collected from the field were summed separately for each dimension on a spread sheet and analyzed using simple linear regression at .05 level of significance with the aid of Special Package for Social Sciences version 23. The criterion for interpretation is that if the calculated alpha level is less than .05 level of significance, the state null hypothesis is rejected and vice versa.

Results and discussion

The findings of the study are presented and organized based on the hypotheses of the study: Hypothesis one: There is no significant prediction of irregular academic calendar on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression was carried out. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Regression analysis of prediction of irregular academic calendar on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria

R = .564 R ² = .318		Adjusted R ² = - .317 Standard error = 4.663			
Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F-value	p-value
Regression	9005.917	1	9005.917	414.188*	.000
Residual	19308.264	888	21.744		
Total	28314.181	889			
Predictor variable	<u>Unstandardized coefficient</u>	Standardized Coefficient		t-value	p-value
	B	std. error	Beta		
Constant	12.922	.804		12.074*	.000
Irregular academic calendar	-.505	.025	-.564	-20.352*	.000

*Significant at .05 level, P < .05

The results in Table 1 showed that a regression coefficient (R) of .564 was obtained giving a coefficient of determination (R²) of .318. This means that about 31.8% of the total variation on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria is explained by the variation in irregular academic calendar. The result of analysis of variance in the regression output produced the computed F-value of 414.188 (p< .05) which is statistically significant at .05 probability level with 1:888 degrees of freedom. This showed that the model is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is significant prediction of irregular academic calendar on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.

Similarly, the result of the regression weights of the predictor variable (irregular academic calendar) showed negative coefficients (B and Beta) of -.505 and -.564 respectively. This means that irregular academic calendar has a negative influence on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria and that a unit increase in irregular academic calendar would lead to more than a unit decrease in external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.

When the prediction model parameters were tested for significance, the regression constant (t= 26.074, p = .000) made significant positive contributions while irregular academic calendar (t= -20.352; p = .000) made significant negative contributions to the prediction of external efficiency of university education in Nigeria; implying that there is significant negative prediction of irregular

academic calendar on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria. The regression equation is $y = 12.922 + -0.505x$.

Hypothesis two: Brain drain does not significantly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression was carried out. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression analysis of prediction of brain drain on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria

R = .472 R ² = .223		Adjusted R ² = .222 Standard error = 4.978			
Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F-value	p-value
Regression	6302.184	1	6302.240	254.240*	.000
Residual	22011.997	888	24.788		
Total	28314.181	889			
Predictor variable	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t-value	p-value
	B	std. error	Beta		
Constant	13.813	.965		14.312*	.000
Brain drain	-.561	.035	-.472	-15.945*	.000

*Significant at .05 level, $P < .05$

The results in Table 2 showed that a regression coefficient (R) of .472 was obtained giving a coefficient of determination (R²) of .223. This means that about 22.3% of the total variation on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria is explained by the variation in brain drain. The result of analysis of variance in the regression output produced the computed F-value of 254.240 ($p < .05$) which is statistically significant at .05 probability level with 1:188 degrees of freedom. This showed that the model is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that brain drain significantly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.

Similarly, the result of the regression weights of the predictor variable (irregular academic calendar) showed a negative coefficients (B and Beta) of -.561 and -.472 respectively. This means that brain drain has a negative influence on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria and that a unit increase in brain drain would lead to more than a unit decrease in external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.

When the prediction model parameters were tested for significance, the regression constant ($t= 14.312$, $p = .000$) made significant positive contributions while brain drain ($t= -15.945$; $p = .000$) made significant negative contributions to the prediction of external efficiency of university education in Nigeria; implying that there is significant negative prediction of brain drain on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria. The regression equation is $y = 13.813 + -0.561x$.

Hypothesis three: ASUU–Federal government industrial disputes (irregular academic calendar, and brain drain) do not jointly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression was carried out. The results are presented in Table 3.

The results in Table 3 showed that a regression coefficient (R) of .622 was obtained giving a coefficient of determination (R^2) of .387. This means that about 38.7% of the total variation on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria is explained by the variation in ASUU–Federal government industrial disputes (Irregular academic calendar and brain drain) while 61.3% is accounted for by other variables not considered in this study. The result of analysis of variance in the regression output produced the computed F-value of 279.923 ($p < .05$) which is statistically significant at .05 probability level with 2:887 degrees of freedom.

Table 3: Regression analysis of joint prediction of ASUU–Federal government industrial disputes on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria

R = .622		Adjusted $R^2 = .386$			
$R^2 = .387$		Std. Error = 4.223			
Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F – value	P – value
Regression	10955.966	2	5477.983	279.923*	.000
Residual	17358.214	887	19.570		
Total	28314.181	889			

*Significant at .05 level, $P < .05$

This shows that the model is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that ASUU–Federal government industrial disputes (irregular academic calendar, and brain drain) jointly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria. To find the relative

contribution of the individual ASUU–Federal government industrial disputes variables (irregular academic calendar, and brain drain) to the variation in external efficiency of university education in Nigeria, a test of regression weight was carried out and the results are presented in Table 4. Table 4 revealed that the calculated t-values for regression constant (7.318, p = .000), irregular academic calendar, (-15.421, p = .000) and brain drain (-9.982, p = .000) were significant at .05 level of significance. Similarly, the results in Table 4 shows that irregular academic calendar, (t = -15.421, p < .05) was the strongest predictor of the variance in external efficiency of university education in Nigeria; followed by brain drain (t = -9.982, p < .05), and regression constant (t= -7.318, p< .05) in the Multiple Regression model. The regression equation is: $y = 7.049 + -.398x_1 + -.342x_2$.

Table 4: Regression weight of ASUU–Federal government industrial disputes on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria

Predictor variable	B	Std. error	Beta	t-value	p-value	Rank
Constant	7.049	.963		7.318*	.000	3rd
Irregular academic calendar	-.398	.026	-.445	-15.421*	.000	1st
Brain drain	-.342	.034	-.288	-9.982*	.000	2nd

*Significant at .05 level, P < .05

Discussion of finding

The result of hypothesis one revealed that there is significant prediction of irregular academic calendar on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria. The instability in academic calendars has led to delays in graduation, compromised quality of education, and a mismatch between the skills imparted and those required by employers. As a result, graduates are often ill-prepared for the workforce, leading to decreased employability and productivity. Furthermore, the irregular academic calendar disrupts the entire education system, making it challenging for universities to maintain consistent curricula, conduct timely assessments, and provide adequate student support. This, in turn, affects the overall quality of graduates produced, ultimately impacting the country's human capital development and economic growth.

This study supported Ali-Ega and Alumode (2026) who found that frequent strikes negatively impact on students' academic performance as it affects students' intellectual ability and increase lack of exposure to practical skills among other; that the impact of ASUU strikes on staff welfare indicates that universities experience lack of staff training during strike actions but gives room for adequate job security. Similarly, this finding corroborated with Ugosor, Joseph and Isah (2025) who also found that compressed academic calendar, even though found ideal for the university management and contain the same materials as a full-length semester is generally regarded as less effective for students and lecturers, and hence, lead to poor students' performance.

In the same vein, this finding confirmed Chukwudi and Idowu (2021) who discovered that the strikes are orchestrated largely by the union quest to protect its members' welfare and swift greeting of any perceived unfriendly steps by the government with strike actions while the government fell short in funding and entrenching a right legal milieu for negotiation and regulation of ASUU. The study further revealed that the public university students who are exposed and tempted to indulge in social vices, have a sense of being disadvantaged unlike their private colleagues, and the society developmental agenda is threatened because of the poor quality of graduates produced from the Ivory Tower. Further, the results aligned with Godknows and Oyinmiebi (2024) who established that there is soured relationship between FGN and ASUU since 1980s due to genuine demands and have resulted into prolonged strikes, which adversely affected graduates practical skills, attitudes, and knowledge related to occupations in different sectors of economic and social life in Nigeria.

In related findings, the results of hypothesis two showed that brain drain significantly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria. The brain drain phenomenon has led to a shortage of qualified lecturers, researchers, and experts in Nigerian universities, compromising the quality of education. This has resulted in graduates who are inadequately prepared for the workforce, lacking the skills and knowledge required by employers. The loss of top talent has also diminished the research capacity and innovation potential of Nigerian universities, hindering their ability to contribute to national development. Furthermore, the brain drain has created a vicious

cycle, where the best students are often tempted to seek opportunities abroad, perpetuating the cycle of talent flight. This has serious implications for Nigeria's economic growth, as the country invests in educating professionals who end up contributing to other economies.

However, this finding authenticated Ebete and Dike (2024) who revealed that the causes of brain drain in Nigerian universities are economic incentives, motivation, funding. Brain drain causes loss of talented lecturers, reduction of the standard of education and the ways of managing brain drain are better salaries, collaboration with international universities for knowledge exchange. In addition, this result supported Eseyin and Wagbara (2023) who established that that migration of lecturers to other countries leads to social and economic crises Such as increased burnout, shortage of skilled workers, dependence on other Universities, reduction in the academic labour force, educational inequalities which can affect the delivery of quality University education.

In a related development, the findings of hypothesis three revealed that ASUU-Federal Government industrial disputes, expressed through irregular academic calendar and brain drain, jointly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria suggests that these disputes undermine the core function of universities as producers of timely, competent, and employable graduates. When strikes and unresolved welfare issues repeatedly disrupt the academic calendar, students spend longer in school and often complete truncated curricula, which weakens skill acquisition. At the same time, the same disputes push experienced lecturers abroad or out of the system, leaving fewer qualified staff to teach, mentor, and sustain research. These two problems do not operate in isolation. Calendar instability increases frustration among academics, which fuels further brain drain, and the loss of staff in turn makes it harder to keep the calendar stable, creating a reinforcing cycle of decline.

The joint predictive power of irregular calendar and brain drain therefore captures the systemic damage caused by the ASUU-FG conflict rather than the effect of one symptom alone. From a policy standpoint, this implies that piecemeal responses will have limited impact. Stabilizing the calendar without addressing staff welfare may not improve graduate output if brain drain persists, and recruiting new lecturers will not help if strikes continue to disrupt teaching. A

urable improvement in external efficiency will require a comprehensive resolution of the ASUU-Federal Government disputes that addresses funding, welfare, and governance together. It should be noted, however, that the cross-sectional nature of the data shows strong prediction rather than direct causation, so longitudinal evidence would be needed to confirm that changes in the disputes precede changes in external efficiency.

Hence, the results also corroborated with Toryuha (2024) who established the poor budgetary allocation to the education sector, failure of the federal government to honour their long-term agreement, staff bonuses, the politicization of the ASUU strike and revitalization of universities are the causes of ASUU strike. The consequences include loss of interest in school due to increased social vices, the rush od academic programmes, missing out on NYSC and other job opportunities, and loss of sponsorship. It was concluded that both the government and ASUU should come to terms to resolve the issue once and for all to avoid future reoccurrence.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that both irregular academic calendars and brain drain significantly predict external efficiency of university education in Nigeria, individually and jointly. Disruptions to the academic calendar delay graduation and reduce instructional quality, while brain drain deprives universities of experienced lecturers needed for effective teaching and mentorship. Together, these factors weaken the ability of universities to produce graduates who are employable, productive, and relevant to the labor market. Addressing these issues is essential to improving the external efficiency of higher education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 1) The Federal Government should honour any agreement reached with ASUU by previous government(s) in order to guide against industrial disharmony which breeds irregular academic calendar with its attendant effect on external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.

- 2) The condition of service of university professionals should be improved upon in order to check brain drain.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is the non-inclusion of employers, university lecturers, labour market experts, and graduates already employed. The study relies solely on National Youth Service Corps members in Cross River State for evidence on external efficiency. This limits the range of perspectives, as employers and labour market experts could have provided direct insight into how graduates perform in the workplace, while lecturers could have explained how ASUU strikes affect teaching and learning. Excluding employed graduates also means the study does not capture long-term effects of university disruptions on career outcomes. Consequently, the findings reflect the experiences of corps members only and may not fully represent the broader impact of ASUU-Federal Government disputes on the external efficiency of university education in Nigeria.

References

- Adamu, M., Soon, J, & Ahmad, S. A. (2017). Factors that affect efficiency of higher education institution: A theoretical and empirical review. *The Social Sciences*, 12(7), 1235-1247.
- Adeyemi, T. O., & Osiki, A. O. (2022). Effects of academic staff strikes on graduate employability in Nigerian public universities. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 20(2), 45–62.
- Alabi, S. I. (2019). Students’ perception on the impact of Academics Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) industrial actions on university development in Nigeria. *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 3(3), 95-104.
- Alfa, A. A., Ochai, G. O., Ogwuche, A. O., & Agbulu, C. A. (2024). Impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities’ (ASUU) Dispute on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria. *International Journal of Research & Innovation in Social Science*, 8(7), 181-191.
- Ali-Ega, U. U., & Alumode, B. E. (2026). Impact of Frequent Strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities on University Education in South East Nigeria. *International Journal Advance Research Publications*, 2(3), 1-17.
- Babalola, J. B., Akpa, A. V., & Oladipo, S. E. (2022). Industrial disputes and graduate earnings in Nigeria: A longitudinal analysis. *African Journal of Educational Management*, 25(1), 78–94.

- Bagonza, G. (2015). *Efficiency and equity and their effect on the quality of university education in Uganda*. A Synopsis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for Admission to the PhD in Education of the University of Hong Kong.
- Baridam, D. M., & Don-Baridam, L. (2020). University administration and the challenges of brain drain in Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 22(4), 57-65.
- Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human capital: a theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Besong, J. B. (2014). Possible Opportunities for Educational System Efficiency and Effective Governance in Cameroon. *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research*, 2(8), 68-74.
- Chukwudi, E. C., & Idowu, S. S. (2021). Asuu strike and the Nigerian governments: Implications on students and society in a changing world. *South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics*, 12(4), 294-304.
- Doubleglist (2013). Industrial Conflict- Causes and effects the students in Universities / College, Ebonyi State. www.doubleglist.com/industrial-conflict-effect-universities-colleges-
- Ebete and Dike (2024). Managing brain drain for students' academic performance in Nigerian universities: A case study of Rivers State. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation*, 5(3), 275-279.
- Egbegi, F. R., & Iheriohanma, E.BJ (2019). Exploring the synergic relationship between ASUU and Federal Government in restoring industrial harmony in Nigerian public universities. *Journal of Humanities and Social Services*, 23(3). 14.23.
- Elite Project Writers (2020). *Industrial unrest in public universities and its effects on the Nigeria educational system: A case study of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)*. Department of Political Science.
- Eseyin, E. O., & Wagbara, C. D. (2023). Managing the socio-economic effects of lecturers' brain drain for sustainable university education in Rivers State. *Journal of Education in Developing Areas (JEDA) Special Edition*, 31(3), 228-243.
- Etodike, V. K. (2020). The Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Strike on Public Universities in Nigeria. How did it impact Tertiary Education? www.grin.com.
- Godknows, N., & Oyinmiebi, P. T. (2024). ASUU- Federal government disputes and its impact on university education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce & Management*, 12(1), 210-221.
- Hassan, A., & Sa'adu, M. (2024). Academic disruption and student performance in Nigerian universities. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development*, 17(1), 88-101.
- Iloka, C. P., & Eze, J. A. (2022). Breaking the culture of silence on rape: A cry for justice. *Journal of Commercial and Property Law*, 9(4), 41-57.
- Mallo, G. D., Benjamin, E. A., & Buba, S. (2023). Review of the effect of brain drain on tertiary education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and National Development*, 1(3), 1-10.

- Muthanna, A., & Sang, G. (2018). Brain drain in higher education: Critical voices on teacher education in Yemen. *London Review of Education*, 16(2), 296–307.
- National Youth Service Corp (2026). *Enrolment of 2026 Batch A Stream 2 Corp members in Cross River State*. Calabar: National Youth Service Corp.
- Nwagbala, C., Okafor, J., & Ani, M. (2022). Determinants of academic performance among university students in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Psychology*, 20(1), 65–78.
- Nwoke, C. M., & Okoro, J. P. (2020). Curriculum relevance and labor market outcomes of Nigerian university graduates. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 77, 102-211.
- Ogunode, N. J., Okweloga, C. N., & Abubakar, A. M. (2022). ASUU strikes and university education in Nigeria: Causes, consequences and solutions. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 11(3), 43-51.
- Okebukola, P. (2021). *State of university education in Nigeria*. Abuja: National Universities Commission.
- Olukoshi, A. (2021). *Education and national development in Nigeria: The crisis of public universities*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2018). Returns to investment in education: A decennial review of the global literature. *Education Economics*, 26(5), 445-458.
- Qutb, R. (2016). Analyzing the external and internal efficiency considerations in public subsidization of education in Egypt. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 7(12), 164-172.
- Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1-17.
- Teachers Institute (2026). Societal concept of education. Evaluating educational efficiency: Internal and external perspectives. <https://teachers.institute/societal-context-of-education/evaluating-educational-efficiency-perspectives/>
- Toryuha, A. T. (2024). Stakeholders' perception of causes and consequences of the academic staff union of universities strike among public universities in Nigeria: 1999-2022. *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, 53(3), 193-206.
- Ugar, A. A. (2018). ASUU strike: The Federal government and Nigerian educational system. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 6(5), 19-32.
- Ugosor, S. S., Joseph, J., & Isah, J. M. (2025). Perceived effects of compressed academic calendar on the academic performance of agricultural science education students of university of Abuja, Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Social Science Education Research*, 13(1), 47-55.
- World Bank. (2023). *Nigeria education sector analysis: Improving efficiency and outcomes*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.
- Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis*, (2nd ed.). New York: Harper and Row.

Yusuf, K. (2020). Nigerian Universities on Strike for one of every five years since 1999.
www.premiumtimes.com