

# Industrial Disputes and Staff Welfare in Public Polytechnics in North Central Nigeria

Welgba Roslyn Yanguchan & Dr. Tyokyaa Cletus Iortswam

Department of Educational Administration and Planning

Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi

**Abstract:** This study investigated impact of industrial disputes on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria. One research question guided the study and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 8,787 staff made up of 4,311 academic and 4,476 non-academics from 16 public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria. A sample of 383 (188 academic and 195 non-academic) staff out of a population of 8787 was selected from 16 polytechnics in North Central Nigeria. Proportionate stratified and simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. A 10-item structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled "Impact of Industrial Disputes on Administration of Public Polytechnics Questionnaire (IIDAPPQ)" was used for data collection. Five experts in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University Makurdi, validated the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through trial testing using Cronbach Alpha statistics, which yielded a total reliability co-efficient of 0.90. This indicated that the instrument was reliable for usage. Data obtained from the study were analysed using Mean scores and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions and Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of goodness of-fit to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that industrial disputes have significant positive impact on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria. It was concluded that industrial disputes have significant positive impact on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria. It was recommended among others that State and Federal Government should declare state of emergencies on provision of provision of facilities in their respective polytechnics through increased budgetary allocation to these polytechnics so that industrial disputes would be avoided and the issue of inadequate provision of provision of facilities will be put to rest.

**Keywords:** industrial disputes, staff welfare

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## 1.1 Introduction

In every organization, whether it is a unionized or non-unionized organization, there will always be disagreement between the employer and employees, either on wages or the general conditions of service of workers. This is evident in all institutions and organizations around the world and Africa in particular. The complex nature of organizations makes disputes inevitable in the work environment. Also, the pursue of incompatible goals by the management and employees often leads to industrial disputes. Disputes seems to be a recurring phenomenon in employee-employer relations. Dahida and Adekeye (2013) posit that industrial disputes is a

common occurrence in both private and public sectors owing to the fact that the goals and objectives of staff and management in any given organization differ. The employees may tend to seek for improved welfare while the management may desire high turnover and improved productivity. Equally, the educational environment being a social organization is not immune from the experiences of disputes between the various associations and the management.

In recent times, stakeholders and the researcher have observed ineffectiveness and inefficiency in the administration of the polytechnics especially in North Central Nigeria particularly as it concerns the issue of proper planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating and controlling, reporting and budgeting. What is responsible for this ineffectiveness and inefficiency in the administration of the polytechnics is what is worrisome to all and sundry in the education sector today. Other observable issues which seem to affect the smooth administration of polytechnics may include inadequate funding, inadequate school facilities, inadequate provision of instructional materials, deterioration of school facilities, poor condition of service for the staff, poor records keeping, inconsistency in the handling of admission process, negligence in the screening of newly admitted students, handling of registration and orientation issues in the polytechnics. These administrative inconsistencies have appeared to be creating so much worry and concern in recent times.

Administration is the design and implementation of systems and procedures to help meet stated objectives (Laurie, 2019). According to Adzongo (2014), administration is the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling of those activities or affairs of organizations or businesses, Adzongo further states that administration is concerned with the performance of executive duties; the carrying of plans, policies or decisions in order to fulfil a purpose. Thus, in this study, administration of polytechnics may be seen as the process of provision of facilities, staff welfare, ensuring staff commitment to duties, stable academic calendar, staff training, provision of research grants and implementation of agreements. However, it has been observed that the administration of polytechnics particularly in the study area appears not to be as smooth as expected, the issues of worry earlier mentioned may have resulted to industrial disputes frequently experienced in many polytechnics today.

Industrial disputes may be defined as a disagreement between management and workers on the terms of employment (Sudha, 2013). Sudha further states that it is a dissension between an employer and employees 'representative; usually a labour union, over payment of salaries allowances and other working conditions which could result in industrial actions. Also, both parties (the management and workmen) mount pressure on one another in the event of industrial disputes. While the workers may embark on strikes, the management on its own part may resort to lockouts. Onyeonoru in Yusuf (2018) gave a more comprehensive definition of industrial disputes as all expressions of discontentment within the employment relationship especially those pertaining to the employment contract and effort bargain. Yusuf further expatiates that it includes formal expressions of conflict, organized along the lines of trade unions and employers' associations as well as the informal conflict that lack systematic organizations such as concealed scores that may be expressed in the form of industrial sabotage, absenteeism, or lateness.

Industrial disputes have become a focal concept in industrial relations system (Igbaji, 2009). Igbaji further posits that while threats of disputes cannot be absolutely prevented,

conflicts or misunderstandings that often emanate from it can be well managed. Polytechnics seem to have been locked up indefinitely and many students dropped out in the process as a result of unresolved industrial disputes bothering on minimum wage, poor funding of tertiary institutions and failure on the part of government to implement an agreement between it and the unions.

The causes of industrial disputes in polytechnics includes factors related to poor infrastructure, poor funding, poor salaries and failure on the part of the federal government and management to implement the agreement between it and the unions (Badekale, Ngige & Hammanjoda, 2016). Other factors are deterioration of academic facilities and poor working conditions. Badekale, Ngige and Hammanjoda further state that underfunding of educational system is one of the major factors responsible for industrial disputes in Nigerian institutions. The polytechnics like other modern institutions are not without disagreement and incompatible objectives and response to issues concerning the welfare of employees are viable sources of disputes. These could later lead to wider industrial disputes if not well handled and might be counter-productive because polytechnics focuses on practical, experimental learning skills and vocational training. Industrial disputes could therefore give rise to inefficiency, ineffectiveness or mental stress in the achievement of stated institution goals and objectives. Thus, this study is focused on staff welfare in public polytechnics.

Staff welfare is aspect of administrative variable which may also be impacted as a result of industrial disputes in polytechnics in the study area. Motivation is defined as the ability of educational institutions to encourage their staff to achieve maximum performance in their various responsibilities (Akpakwu, 2012). The author also looks at motivation as the discovery and the utilization of the stimuli that would bring about the desired behavioural pattern. According to the author, motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation occurs or comes as a result of a drive to satisfy a need, while extrinsic or external motivation is the external force by someone else on another person to act as directed. Akpakwu further states that the issue of staff welfare in institutions of learning includes: prompt payment of salaries/allowances, bonuses, provision of accommodation, financial assistance, transportation means and rewarding of staff. Akpakwu further states that this goes a long way in motivating the staff towards better and higher work performance and increases the profitability of the institution. Joshua (2012) states that from all indications, industrial disputes are supposed to be concerned with employment issues and conditions of work and/or service of works collectively or individually. Matters under this may include welfare packages like prompt payment of staff salaries, wages and other issues related to the existence of the same union and inter-union; conflicts are also regarded as trade disputes/conflict under the decree. Thus, aside from the issue of staff welfare which industrial disputes may have impact on is the commitment of staff to their duties. It thus appears that if staff welfare is not properly addressed in the polytechnics, there may be issue of staff commitment and vice versa.

The extent of this disputes in Nigerian polytechnics can be better appreciated when considered from the point of view of the 'wider effects' of the disputes on the society more generally. The magnitude of the problem of funding and wage grievances in Nigeria's education sector has led to a series of strikes (Ajetomobi & Ayanwale, 2009). Just recently, on May 16, 2022

ASUP embarked on a two-week warning strike to protest Federal Government's non-fulfillment of aspects of a memorandum of action it signed with the union in 2021 (Olayinka, 2022). As with all these industrial conflicts, strikes have significant wider social consequences. On a micro level, strikes by academic staff members disrupt the learning process which further damages the educational system. Odubela (2012) concludes that effective learning or an enhanced performance is achieved by successful coverage of the course outline timely and before the examination. This is rarely achieved when there is strike action. Thus, this is one of the government's repeated claims against the union's activities as well. According to Badekale, Ngige and Hammanjoda (2016), calendar has been constantly disrupted due to industrial actions, making learning and research difficult for students. Furthermore, Parents are the indirect victims of the ASUP strikes. ASUP's frequent strikes have increased the length of time during which their children or wards stay at home, leading to wastage of resources and placing further burdens on household economies which are already often overstretched. Some parents, especially those from low income families, though dissatisfied with the situation, are unable to send their children to private tertiary institutions. Nonetheless, the rate of enrolment in private institutions has been on the increase during the past few years. Apart from students and their parents, the disputes affect the quality of graduates produced by the polytechnics. Even though some studies have been carried out on industrial disputes in polytechnics, there appears little studies on industrial disputes and their impact on polytechnics education in Nigeria and study area in particular. It is against this background that the researcher has deemed it necessary to investigate impact of industrial disputes on administration of public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria with particular focus on staff welfare.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In the administration of polytechnics in North Central Nigeria today, staff are expected to be provided with the kind of environment that recognizes and caters for their, needs and aspirations. Such polytechnics are also expected to provide adequate welfare packages for their staff such as: adequate infrastructural facilities, adequate instructional material, prompt payment of staff salaries and allowances, provide health insurance schemes that would take care of the health of her staff, make available accommodation and transportation means for their staff. This may boost their morale towards better commitment and higher productivity in the respective polytechnics in the study area. Thus, in the case that the working conditions of the polytechnics are not good or neglected entirely, there may be dissatisfaction and demoralization from the staff which may result to industrial disputes.

The researcher has in recent times observed with worry and concern the frequency of industrial disputes between Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) and the Federal government of Nigeria (FGN) particularly in the study area. The educational stakeholders in the areas have expressed so much worry and concern over the frequent cases of industrial disputes between ASUP and FG in the study area. Personal observation by the researcher reveals that such issues of worry and concern may have been associated with the level of dissatisfaction of ASUP over issues of inadequate provision of working equipment/tools, inadequate provision of facilities, inadequate accommodation for staff and other inadequate staff welfare packages such as: provision of health service, incentives, hazard allowance, earned academic allowances,

prompt payment of staff salaries, poor internet facilities and uncondusive offices by the FGN. Similarly, there are observed issues of poor wages and service conditions of scholastic staff members in government owned Polytechnics.

Based on the above observed frequent cases of industrial disputes between ASUP and FGN which might be as a result of poor conditions of polytechnics in the study area especially in the aforementioned areas, the researcher is motivated to investigate the status quo in the study area. The problem of this study is therefore stated in a question form: What is the impact of industrial disputes on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study was to investigate impact of industrial disputes on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria. Specifically the study sought to:

1. ascertain the impact of industrial disputes on staff welfare in public polytechnics.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the impact of industrial disputes on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria?

### **1.5 Statement of Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**H<sub>01</sub>**. Industrial disputes have no significant impact on staff welfare in public polytechnics.

### **2.1 Research Methodology**

This study adopted survey research design. This design according to Emaikwu (2015) is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analysing data from a few people considered to be representative sample of the entire population. The design was chosen as most appropriate for this study because the study seeks to provide answers to the research questions as well as test the hypotheses of the study. This study was carried out in North Central Nigeria. It is one of the six geo-political zones in the country. It consisted of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau State and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 8,787 staff made up of 4,311 academic and 4,476 non-academics from 16 public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria. A sample of 383 (188 academic and 195 non-academic) staff out of a population of 8787 was selected from 16 polytechnics in North Central Nigeria. Proportionate stratified and simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. A 10-item structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled "Impact of Industrial Disputes on Administration of Public Polytechnics Questionnaire (IIDAPPQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument used for data collection was a four point rating scale with a response mode of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. Five experts in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University Makurdi, validated the instrument. The reliability of

the instrument was ascertained through trial testing using Cronbach Alpha statistics, which yielded a total reliability co-efficient of 0.90. This indicated that the instrument was reliable for usage. Data obtained from the study were analysed using Mean scores and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions while Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of goodness of-fit was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision was that if the calculated ( $\chi^2$ ) value was greater than the critical table value, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted and vice versa.

### **3.1 Results and Findings**

This section presented and discussed the results of the study

#### **Research Question 1:**

What is the impact of industrial disputes on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria?

The data that provided answer to the research question are presented on Table 2.

**Table 1:**

***Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation for Scores on Impact of Industrial Disputes on Staff welfare in Public Polytechnics in North Central Nigeria***

<b>Item No</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>N</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b><math>\delta</math></b>	<b>Decision</b>
1.	Staff salaries are paid without delay as a result of industrial disputes between ASUP and Government.	372	2.96	1.09	Agree
2.	Staff accommodation issues are given prompt attention as a result of industrial disputes between ASUP and Government.	372	2.67	0.80	Agree
3.	ASUP industrial disputes has brought about upward review of staff salaries.	372	3.31	0.78	Agree
4.	Prolonged industrial disputes between ASUP and Government has often resulted to payment of arrears of earned academic allowances.	372	2.99	1.03	Agree
5.	Prolonged industrial disputes between ASUP and Government has never resulted to payment of promotion arrears of staff.	372	2.78	1.04	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean/ Standard Deviation</b>			<b>2.94</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>Agree</b>



Table 1 shows that items 6-10 had mean scores of 2.96, 2.67, 3.31, 2.99 and 2.78 with corresponding standard deviations of 1.09, 0.80, 0.78, 1.03 and 1.04 respectively. Based on the criteria for decision making, it means that the mean scores for all the item were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means that respondents agreed that Staff salaries are paid without delay as a result of industrial disputes between ASUP and Government. They disagreed with the statement that Staff accommodation issues are given prompt attention as a result of industrial disputes between ASUP and Government. They also agreed with the statement that ASUP industrial disputes has brought about upward review of staff salaries. They agreed with the statement that Prolonged industrial disputes between ASUP and Government has often resulted to payment of arrears of earned academic allowances. Furthermore, they agreed that prolonged industrial disputes between ASUP and Government has never resulted to payment of promotion arrears of staff. The cluster mean of 2.94 was also above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviations were also small which shows that there is homogeneity in respondents' pattern of responses for the items raised. This implies that industrial disputes impact positively on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria.

**3.2 Hypotheses Testing**

**Hypothesis 1:**

**Table 1:**

***Chi-square Analysis on the Impact of Industrial Disputes on Staff welfare in Public Polytechnics in North Central Nigeria***

<b>Opinions</b>	<b>Observed N</b>	<b>Expected N</b>	<b>Level of Sig.</b>	<b>df</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math>-cal</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>Decision</b>
SA	55	93.0	0.05	3	70.97	0.00	Sig.
A	61	93.0					
D	99	93.0					
SD	157	93.0					

*a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 93.0.*

Table 4 revealed that  $\chi^2$ -cal = 70.97, at df =3 and p = 0.00. Since p-value of 0.00 < 0.05 at 3 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis which states that Industrial disputes have no significant impact on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria was therefore, rejected. This means that there is sufficient statistical evidence to state that Industrial disputes has significant impact on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria.

**3.3 Summary of Findings**

This study revealed that industrial disputes have significant positive impact on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria.

#### **4.1 Discussion of Findings**

Based on the results of the analysis of the one research questions raised and testing of the one hypothesis formulated for the study, the finding is discussed here as follows.

The study indicated that industrial disputes have significant positive impact on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria. This shows that staff salaries are paid without delay as a result of industrial disputes between ASUP and Government. Staff accommodation issues are given prompt attention as a result of industrial disputes between ASUP and Government. ASUP industrial disputes has brought about upward review of staff salaries. Prolonged industrial disputes between ASUP and Government has often resulted to payment of arrears of earned academic allowances. Prolonged industrial disputes between ASUP and Government has never resulted to payment of promotion arrears of staff. The finding relates with the finding of Ijov (2019) which revealed that there is significant mean difference of the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' strike actions on conditions of service of academic staff between Federal and State universities in North East Zone of Nigeria. The finding align with that of Yusuf (2018) who found that while the frequency of disputes(s) in the college system still remains low till date, the causes of disputes were not limited to the non-payment of workers' entitlements, lack of conducive working environment, but more importantly government's penchant renege for agreements. Also, the effects include loss of man – hour, poor academic performance amongst others. The finding relates with that of Eze and Chukwuemeka (2022) which revealed that upward review of wages and salaries have significant effect on quality of teaching in Ebonyi State University. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that collective bargaining enhances industrial harmony in terms of stable academic calendar, staff productivity and effective communication in university education programmes as well promotes quality of teaching, students' academic performance and stabilizing academic activities. The finding also disagrees with that of Arrey (2015) who found that poor conditions of service and remuneration, underfunding of the university system, poor communication between the management and unions, autocratic leadership styles of some university administrators, non-participation of unions in university decision-making and government intervention in universities' internal management were the major factors associated with trade union disputes in Nigerian universities. This indicates that industrial disputes have significant positive impact on staff welfare in public polytechnics because, staff welfare is seriously improved when SUP finally resolve their disputes with the government through reaching on certain agreement.

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that industrial disputes have significant positive impact on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria. This means that industrial disputes have significant positive impact on staff welfare in public polytechnics in North Central Nigeria.

#### **6.1 Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should try in ensuring that public polytechnics are managed in such a way



that a sustained industrial harmony with Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) will lead to provision of adequate staff welfare.

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