

# The Impact of 'No Work, No Pay' Policy on Industrial Actions: A Case Study of ASUU at the University of Lagos

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## Abstract

Trade unions regard the right to strike as a vital tool to counter low wages or unfavorable working conditions. This study explores the impact of the "No Work, No Pay" policy on industrial actions by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria. Using a qualitative approach and a review of related literature, primary data were collected through structured interviews. The interview guide featured two sections: Section A addressed respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, while Section B focused on the study's core subject. The study's population consisted of 1,707 ASUU members, and 58 interviews were conducted across eight faculties at the University of Lagos, located on the Akoka campus. Data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that the "No Work, No Pay" policy has a significant influence on academic staff's willingness to engage in strikes and the frequency of such actions in the sector. The study concluded that the policy has a dual effect: it can deter strikes by encouraging alternative dispute resolution while reinforcing lecturers' determination due to perceived infringements on their rights. Therefore, the study recommended a continuous dialogue between lecturers and government authorities to address disputes constructively.

**Keywords:** Policy, No Work No Pay, Industrial Action, Trade Union, Academic Staff Union of the University, Collective Actions.

## 1. Introduction

Strike action is a globally recognized mechanism through which trade unions assert the collective interests of their members, especially in situations where dialogue and negotiation with employers fail to yield favorable outcomes. In Nigeria, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has historically used strike actions as a primary bargaining tool to demand improved funding of universities, better remuneration, and favorable working conditions for its members. A notable example is the nationwide strike by ASUU from February 14 to October 14, 2022, which led to an eight-month suspension of academic activities in federal universities across the country.

In response to the persistent strike actions by ASUU, the Federal Government of Nigeria invoked the provisions of Section 43 of the Trade Disputes Act, Cap. T8, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004. This section stipulates that employees who participate in a strike are not entitled to wages or benefits for the duration of the strike, and that this period shall not be counted towards their continuous employment. Consequently, the government implemented the "No Work, No Pay" policy, a decision that has generated heated debates among stakeholders in the education and labor sectors.

Proponents of the policy argue that it is a legitimate and necessary response to curb frequent and prolonged strikes, which have significantly disrupted the academic calendar and diminished the quality of education in public universities. On the other hand, critics

view the policy as punitive and counterproductive, noting that it overlooks the root causes of industrial actions and undermines workers' rights to organize and protest. Moreover, the policy may have unintended consequences, such as deepening tensions between the government and academic unions, reducing employee morale, and worsening the financial and psychological well-being of lecturers.

The recurring nature of ASUU strikes has become a systemic issue in Nigeria's higher education sector. Many students experience extended delays in graduation due to prolonged industrial actions, which affect their academic progress and have social and economic implications. While the "No Work, No Pay" policy is intended to serve as a deterrent, it remains unclear whether it reduces the incidence of strikes or simply hardens the resolve of union members to press for their demands.

Against this backdrop, it becomes necessary to empirically assess the actual impact of the "No Work, No Pay" policy on industrial actions in Nigerian universities. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the effect of the policy on the behavior and decision-making of university lecturers during industrial disputes. Using the University of Lagos ASUU chapter as a case study, the research aims to:

- Investigate the extent to which the "No Work, No Pay" policy influences lecturers' willingness to participate in strike actions and other forms of collective protest.

- Determine whether the implementation of the policy has led to a reduction in the frequency or duration of strikes in federal universities; and
- Evaluate the impact of the policy on the financial well-being and livelihood of lecturers who engage in industrial actions.

Through this study, a clearer understanding of the implications of the "No Work, No Pay" policy will be established, providing insights that could inform government labor policies and strategies for resolving disputes in the university system.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Concept of No Work No Pay

The employer-employee relationship is built on the premise that an individual (the employee) agrees to provide their labor, services, skills, or contributions to another party (the employer) in exchange for compensation, which may include wages, benefits, allowances, or other forms of remuneration (Ekpo, 2016). By entering into this arrangement, the employee consents to follow the employer's "direction and control" while performing their duties for the organization. Unless otherwise specified in an employment contract, an employer is not obligated to compensate an employee who refrains from working due to absence, disputes, or a lack of work. This principle is commonly referred to as "No work, no pay" (Ekpo, 2016).

The "No work, no pay" principle is a cornerstone of labor and industrial relations. Its core idea is that employees are expected to perform the duties assigned to them as part of their employment. If these duties are not fulfilled, the employee forfeits any entitlement to wages or other forms of compensation.

In comparison, the principle is also embedded in labor laws across several countries. In India, Section 22 of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, empowers employers not to pay wages during illegal or unjustified strikes (Agarwal, 2020). Similarly, South Africa's Labour Relations Act (1995) permits the implementation of a "no work, no pay" policy when employees engage in protected or unprotected industrial action, although employers must follow due legal process (Bhorat & Cheadle, 2009).

### 2.2 Position of the Law on No Work No Pay Policy

An employee is generally entitled to wages as initially agreed. The International Labour Convention 95 on the Protection of Wages (1949) prohibits payment through promissory notes, vouchers, or other substitutes for legal tender (ILO, 1949). However, Nigeria's

Trade Disputes Act (2004), Section 43(1)(a) specifies that employees participating in a strike are not entitled to wages or compensation for the strike duration, which is also excluded from their continuous employment tenure calculations.

While an employer's obligations may be suspended during a strike, the law does not prohibit employers from compensating employees for the strike period if they choose. The National Industrial Court, in *SSANU v. Federal Government of Nigeria* (2008), upheld this principle, affirming that employers can forgo enforcing "no work, no pay" without penalizing strikers further.

Judicial interpretations of "no work, no pay" include *Abdulraheem v. Olufeagba* (2006), where university staff on strike for better pay were denied wages for the period they refused to work. The court deemed the trial court's award of salaries to the respondents unlawful, affirming employers' exemption from paying wages during strikes under Section 43(1)(a) of the Act.

However, Section 43(1)(b) protects employees during employer lockouts, ensuring wages and rights tied to continuous employment remain unaffected. This ensures clarity in cases where employer actions prevent employees from fulfilling their contractual obligations.

Globally, the UK's Employment Rights Act (1996) gives employers a similar right to withhold pay during strike actions, though employees retain protection from unfair dismissal if the strike is lawful. In the United States, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) allows private-sector employers to implement "no work, no pay" policies during strikes, while also recognizing workers' rights to organize (Estlund, 2002).

### 2.3 Concept of Industrial Action

Strikes have become a significant aspect of the history of higher education in Nigeria, both at the internal and national levels. The frequent occurrence of strikes can be attributed to what is perceived as a callous approach to policymaking by the government and academia. Despite substantial investments in policies, funding, knowledge, and human resources, higher education institutions in Nigeria are facing challenges, and the quality of education is on a decline, which is also impacting the country's economy (Anonaba, 2015).

In this context, a strike is defined as a coordinated refusal by employees to work, typically as a form of protest aimed at obtaining concessions from their employers. It is essentially a method of protest triggered by unresolved disputes between employers and employees (Enomah et al., 2010). Strikes in higher education can take various forms, including internal strikes

within specific institutions or nationwide strikes that affect multiple tertiary institutions. These strikes may involve a complete cessation of services by staff or partial strikes where employees show up but choose not to work. Strikes can also be categorized as definitive, with a set duration, or indefinite, with no predetermined endpoint (Ige, 2014).

In countries like South Africa, university strikes have also become common in recent years due to disputes over funding, fees, and employment conditions (Bawa, 2016). In the UK, higher education institutions witnessed widespread strikes in 2018 and 2020 over pension reforms and working conditions, organized by the University and College Union (UCU). These global parallels underscore that industrial actions in higher education are not exclusive to Nigeria but reflect systemic issues within public tertiary institutions globally (Bryson & Gomez, 2005).

## 2.4 History of ASUU Strikes.

ASUU has a long history of industrial action to advocate for fair compensation, university autonomy, and better working conditions. During the 1980s military regime, the union actively opposed government policies, leading to its proscription in 1988 and 1992. Strikes in 1994 and 1996 protested the dismissal of workers under Sani Abacha's regime. Despite the restoration of democracy in 1999, ASUU faced resistance, particularly from President Obasanjo's administration, while continuing its advocacy for university staff rights.

Key strikes include the 2009 indefinite strike over unmet agreements, which ended after three months, and the 2013 strike lasting over five months, primarily addressing underfunding of public universities and arrears of earned allowances. Despite government negotiations and partial agreements, ASUU has repeatedly cited unfulfilled promises, including issues related to pensions, university autonomy, and the Treasury Single Account.

**Table 1.** ASUU Strike from 1999-2022

Year	Duration (Month)	Year	Duration (Month)
1999	5	2009	4
2001	3	2010	5
2002	1/2	2011	2
2003	6 days	2013	5
2005	1/2	2017	1
2006	3 Days	2018	3
2007	3	2020	9
2008	1/4	2022	8

ASUU's actions have drawn mixed public reactions, with some viewing the strikes as necessary for educational reform and others criticizing them as self-

serving. The union has faced challenges in gaining public support, often perceived as patronizing in its communication. Strikes remain a defining strategy in ASUU's efforts to improve Nigeria's tertiary education system.

## 2.5 Theoretical Framework

### 2.5.1 Unitary theory

In 1966, Alan Fox introduced the unitary framework, which views an organization as a unified entity with shared authority, objectives, and loyalty. This perspective emphasizes collective goals, values, and a sense of shared destiny, treating all members as part of a cohesive family. Unitarism rejects factionalism and prioritizes harmony within the organization (Fajana, 2000).

Conflict is seen as unacceptable and harmful in this framework, with striking employees often dismissed rather than negotiated with. Trade unions are considered external disruptors to management's authority and are suppressed as unwelcome intrusions. Rose (2008) highlights the unitary theory's bias toward management, portraying labor unions as competitors for employee loyalty and prioritizing workplace consensus and order.

The unitary theory is relevant to this study as it sheds light on the government's stance toward strikes, aligning with its preference for minimizing conflict and asserting control over industrial actions. The "no work, no pay" policy reflects this approach, discouraging disputes and emphasizing harmony by resisting external influences like trade unions. This framework helps explain the tension between ASUU's advocacy for improved working conditions and the government's focus on maintaining order and control.

### 2.5.2 Pluralist theory

The pluralist theory, introduced by Alan Fox in 1966, interprets organizations as comprising various groups with distinct values, goals, and interests. This viewpoint acknowledges that conflicts between employees and management are a natural result of differing priorities. Instead of viewing conflict negatively, the pluralist approach considers it an inherent, functional, and rational aspect of organizational dynamics, best resolved through negotiation, collective bargaining, and consensus-building.

Under this framework, trade unions are regarded as essential and legitimate entities that challenge managerial authority while promoting both collaboration and competition. They serve as a platform for employees to voice their concerns and actively participate in

decision-making processes. Rose (2008) contrasts this with the unitary perspective, emphasizing that pluralism better aligns with modern labor relations and societal trends, particularly in unionized environments.

This theory is particularly relevant to examining the "no work, no pay" policy and strike actions by ASUU. It sheds light on the inherent conflicts between ASUU and the government, affirming the union's role in advocating for improved work conditions. The pluralist perspective emphasizes the significance of negotiation and collective bargaining in addressing disputes, highlighting that such conflicts are not only inevitable but also critical for achieving fairness and balance in labor relations.

### 3. Methods

In this study, a qualitative research approach was employed, along with a review of the literature on industrial action and the 'no-work, no-pay' policy. According to Chidi and Shadare (2017), the qualitative research approach is adopted when the study is exploratory in nature and is more adequate when the researcher uses research questions rather than hypotheses. It is also more effective when the problem of misleading information, such as in surveys, is minimized.

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2009), qualitative researchers examine people's lives, lived experiences, behavior, emotions, and feelings about a phenomenon as described by participants, as well as organizational functioning, to gain a deeper understanding of behavior and institutions. Without developing or testing any hypotheses, the exploratory nature of the qualitative research approach is employed (Chidi & Shadare, 2017). Kangai (2012) claims that qualitative research, which includes what has been referred to as a phenomenological approach to social world study, focuses on how individuals comprehend and interpret their social settings.

Through the use of structured interviews designed by the researcher, primary data was collected. Respondents were required to answer or reply to questions from a preset list during the structured interview in order to obtain relevant information on the topic from the respondents. The interview schedule/guide was divided into two sections. Section B consists of twelve questions which focus on the subject matter of the study, while Section A includes five questions on the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics.

The total population size of the study comprises all the academic staff who are members of the Academic Staff Union of the University (ASUU) with a total number of 1707 members. The researcher conducted seven interviews with each faculty at the University of Lagos. The total number of faculty in the

Akoka campus of the University of Lagos is eight, but an additional two interviews were conducted in the Faculty of Management Sciences as the faculty of the researcher, so the total number of interviews conducted for the study is 58. Every academic staff member has an equal chance to be interviewed, as the policy affects every level and cadre of academic staff who participate in the strike action.

To ensure content validity, the interview guide was reviewed by experts. Three senior academic staff with doctoral degrees in industrial relations, labor law, and qualitative research methodology served as validators. These experts reviewed the interview items to ensure that they adequately captured the research objectives and were suitable for eliciting in-depth qualitative responses. Feedback from the reviewers led to minor modifications in the phrasing of the question to enhance clarity and alignment with the research aims (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Reliability was assured through peer debriefing and inter-coder agreement. After transcription of interview responses, two independent researchers reviewed a random subset of transcripts to ensure that themes were consistently applied during coding. This process improved the reliability of data interpretation and minimized bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Additionally, an integrity test was conducted using Turnitin plagiarism detection software, which yielded a 0% similarity index, confirming the originality of the interview questions and responses.

Data analyses were conducted using content analysis, a method amenable to qualitative research. Sommer and Summer (1991) submitted that the use of content analysis techniques is most useful in analysing interview data or responses to open-ended questions on completed questionnaires. Content analysis, also called "word-count analysis," involves counting the number of times a particular word or concept occurs in a narrative, which is then categorized quantitatively and subjected to statistical analysis. Content analysis techniques describe the form and content of written, spoken, and visual communication (Sommer & Sommer, 1991). According to Sommer and Sommer (1991), the basis of a content analysis is quantification, that is, expressing qualitative data in numbers. This method was used to examine recurring views and patterns among the respondents regarding the "no work, no pay" policy and ASUU's strike actions.

### 4. Result and Discussion

The results of the field work were presented in this section. Fifty-eight interviewees properly responded to the interview, and the responses from them were used for the analyses.

**Table 2.** Analysis of socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	33	57.9
	Female	25	42.1
Designation/ Cadre	Assistant Lecturer	3	3.5
	Lecturer Two	4	7.0
	Lecturer One	5	8.8
	Senior Lecturer	15	26.3
	Associate Professor	10	17.5
	Professor	21	36.8
Length of Service	0 – 10 Years	15	26.3
	11 – 20 Years	25	43.9
	21– 30 Years	14	24.6
	31 – 40 Years	3	5.3
Age	0 to 30	1	1.8
	31 – 40	2	3.5
	41 – 50	15	26.3
	51 – 60	27	47.4
	61 – 70	12	21.1
Marital Status	Single	2	3.5
	Married	54	94.7
	Widower/Widow	1	1.8

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, as shown in Table 2, offer important contextual insights for interpreting the study's findings. The gender distribution reveals a predominance of male respondents (57.9%) compared to females (42.1%). This reflects the general gender composition in many Nigerian academic institutions where male faculty often outnumber females, especially in senior roles. The designation data shows that most respondents were Professors (36.8%) and Senior Lecturers (26.3%), suggesting that the sample comprises individuals with substantial academic experience and professional maturity.

This is further supported by the years of service, where 43.9% have served for 11–20 years and 24.6% for 21–30 years. These experienced individuals are more likely to have actively participated in, or been affected by, industrial actions, thus enhancing the reliability and depth of insights into the "No Work, No Pay" policy. Age-wise, most respondents (47.4%) fall within the 51–60 age group, aligning with their senior academic ranks and years of service.

The dominance of married individuals (94.7%) also implies a demographic that may have family responsibilities, potentially influencing their perspectives on the impact of withheld salaries during strikes. Collectively, this demographic profile strengthens the study's credibility and relevance, as it draws from a knowledgeable and directly impacted segment of the academic workforce.

#### 4.1 Analyses of Research Questions

Table 3 summarizes the responses from participants in the study on whether they are aware of the 'No work, no pay' policy in Nigeria. It can be inferred from the table that the majority of the respondents said yes, that they are aware of the policy.

**Table 3.** Are you aware of the Policy of No work, no pay in Nigeria?

Responses	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
It is new	1	1.7
No	3	5.2
Not Really	2	3.4
Yes	52	89.7

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 4.** How would you explain the No work, no pay policy in the context of industrial action among university lecturers?

<b>The majority of the respondents explained the No work no pay policy in the context of industrial action among University Lecturers as follows</b>
<i>Workers who fail to work for a certain number of times will not be entitled to receive pay for the period during which they were absent from work.</i>
<i>When there is a strike and one fails to do one's duty, there will be no remuneration paid</i>
<i>No salary when on strike</i>
<i>It is a means of discouraging industrial actions by ensuring that staff keep working while seeking other forms of redress</i>
<i>When you do not carry out your duties in line with the terms of employment, your salary will be withheld</i>
<i>Staff don't get paid when absent from work on account of industrial action</i>
<i>It means if lecturers do not render teaching and research services, as expected of their professional role at the university, they don't get paid for the duration of the industrial action</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 5.** In your opinion, why do university lecturers resort to industrial action?

<b>The majority of the respondents provided the following opinion</b>
<i>(1) Insensitivity of the government. (2) reneging on promises made in good faith, (3) non-implementation of the agreement entered into in good faith, and (4) to preserve the university system from total collapse</i>
<i>Poor pay. Poor or inadequate working facilities</i>
<i>To get the government to implement subsisting agreements, or to encourage the government to discuss with the Union, or ask for better conditions of service</i>
<i>Absence of a timely dispute resolution mechanism; inadequate funding of universities, poor remuneration of academic staff, among others</i>
<i>Poor conditions of service, poor teaching facilities, refusal of payments of promised obligations by the government, etc</i>

<i>Poor welfare and university underfunding, failure to pay reasonable salaries commensurate with the efforts of the lecturers, or the government's deliberate failure to honour signed agreements, and insincerity in implementing policies to enhance a good academic environment. Payment of salaries is not competitive enough compared to other African nations</i>
<i>A strike by lecturers is always a result of insensitivity and an uncooperative attitude on the part of the government. Strike is the only language the government understands</i>
<i>Lack of trust, communication failure, insincerity, and deliberate policy somersaults as well as procrastination by successive governments</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 6.** What do you think are the main objectives or goals of implementing a No work no pay policy by the Federal government of Nigeria on university lecturers during industrial action?

<b>Below is a summary of the objectives and goals mentioned by the respondents</b>
<i>To prevent frivolous and frequent strikes which cripple the economy and affect society negatively</i>
<i>Wickedness and abuse of power, and to keep workers as slaves</i>
<i>To force lecturers back to class after all 'Hunger is a weapon of war</i>
<i>To discourage Lecturers from going on strike, therefore preventing them from requesting better conditions of service</i>
<i>To inflict pain so that the lecturers could go back to work.</i>
<i>It is to act as a deterrent for lecturers, to prevent them from embarking on further strikes, or to discourage members from supporting the call for a strike.</i>
<i>To restrain workers from going on strike and to starve workers so they don't have money to sustain their strike</i>
<i>To punish Lecturers and ensure no further strikes are possible, and to prevent wickedness.</i>
<i>To discourage lecturers from embarking on a strike.</i>
<i>To prevent unnecessary strikes.</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 7.** Is it during the last strike that the policy was first implemented?

<b>Summary of the responses is as follows:</b>
<i>It has always been there before its recent implementation. Its outcome is devastating for the striking lecturer</i>
<i>No. It was implemented in 1993/ 1994</i>
<i>It has been explored repeatedly, but salaries are then paid in arrears</i>
<i>That was not the first time. They have done it before at different times. In 2020, they did the same but later paid. It has been implemented against the non-medical staff of federal medical centres, and they lost their two months' salary, the duration of the strike</i>
<i>To my understanding, they have been doing it before, but they were paid whenever the strike was over. But now they have refused</i>

<i>The policy was enforced during the 2020 academic session strike, but the salaries withheld were later paid.</i>
<i>No, it was implemented a few times, but the money was eventually paid each time</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 8.** How does the No Work No Pay policy align with existing labor laws and regulations?

<b>The summary of responses of the majority is:</b>
<i>It is an aspect of labour law that was to discourage workers from holding their employer to a tight corner and not to distort the work environment or production</i>
<i>The government, as an employer of labor, has the legal right not to pay employees for work not done</i>
<i>A 'no work, no pay' policy is provided for in the law, as outlined in the Trade Disputes Act. It is also in line with the provisions of the ILO Convention. more so, it is international best practice</i>
<i>It does align, but the government is always the one that breaks the agreement</i>
<i>Well, it was stated there that the employer has the right to stop payment while the employee strikes</i>
<i>Yes, it is in existence, but it cannot be easily applied to the intellectual community, where work activities should not be measured as in factories or direct labour</i>
<i>It has always been enshrined in the law, just not enforced</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 9.** What changes have you observed in the attitude of university lecturers towards industrial actions or any collective action since the introduction of the No Work No Pay policy?

<b>The summary of the attitude of the respondents towards industrial actions or any collective actions is presented below:</b>
<i>A lackadaisical attitude and a lack of passion for the work have led some to leave the industry or other organisations.</i>
<i>No zeal to go for another strike</i>
<i>It's affected the morals of lecturers, as many have left the system</i>
<i>Many are not ready to participate in a strike.</i>
<i>It has weakened the union and the lecturers</i>
<i>Workers are willing to go on strike, but only for improved service conditions only</i>
<i>University lecturers are not quick to embark on another industrial action</i>
<i>No one wants to embark on any strike again</i>
<i>Reluctance to go on strike</i>
<i>Frustration and lack of will to embark on future actions that have to do with university funding, except for industrial action that has to do with lecturers' welfare</i>
<i>It dampens the morale and passion of lecturers towards teaching</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 10.** Have there been any instances where the No Work No Pay policy has successfully deterred university lecturers from participating in industrial actions? Please share specific examples

Responses	Frequency	Relative Frequency
No	19	32.8
I do not have any idea	36	62.0
Yes	3	5.2

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The table above summarizes the responses from participants in the study on whether the No Work No Pay policy has successfully deterred university lecturers from participating in industrial actions. It can be inferred from the table that the majority of respondents stated they do not have such information. And only a few of them said yes.

**Table 11.** How does the No Work No Pay policy impact the financial well-being of university lecturers who participate in industrial actions?

<i>The following is a summary of the responses of the respondents on how the policy of no-work-no pay impacts the financial well-being of university lecturers who participated in the industrial action</i>
<i>It has a substantial adverse effect, but in a number of cases, they were able to hold on as the strike lasted</i>
<i>Very damaging</i>
<i>Badly affect their financial well-being</i>
<i>Grossly affected the financial status of lecturers</i>
<i>The policy implementation was unprecedented, and as such, it impacted their well-being negatively</i>
<i>It certainly has a substantial negative impact on lecturers' finances</i>
<i>Calamitous! Many are still paying off debts.</i>
<i>It made lecturers financially incapacitated</i>
<i>The financial capability of university lecturers is negatively affected</i>
<i>Very negatively, particularly in terms of taking care of their basic needs, including health, children's school fees, house rents, etc</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 12.** How does the No Work No Pay policy impact the morale and motivation of university lecturers during and after the industrial action?

<i>The following is a summary of the responses of the respondents on the impact of the no-work-no-pay policy on the morale and motivation of university lecturers during and after the industrial action</i>
<i>It downgrades the morale of university lecturers, with observed changes in their attitude.</i>
<i>It lowers morale and causes many lecturers to resign from the system</i>
<i>Very demoralizing</i>
<i>It kills the morale of the staff.</i>

<i>The morale of lecturers is very low</i>
<i>University lecturers' morale has been poor, and they are not highly encouraged to put their best work.</i>
<i>Very negative impact. It leaves us helpless</i>
<i>It lowers the morale</i>
<i>It negatively impacts the morale and motivation of lecturers both during and after the industrial action</i>
<i>Most lecturers became discouraged and demoralised</i>
<i>It has dampened their morale, and most are not motivated</i>
<i>Lecturer morale was low, and motivation to work was dead</i>

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 13.** Does the "No work, no pay" policy reduce the frequency of industrial action by academic staff of the university?

Responses	Frequency	Relative Frequency
No	10	17.2
undecided	13	22.4
Yes	35	60.3

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 13 above summarizes the responses from participants in the study regarding whether the 'no-work-no-pay' policy reduces the frequency of industrial action among university academic staff. It can be inferred from the table that the majority of the respondents said yes that the no-work-no-pay policy will reduce the frequency of industrial action by academic staff of the university.

**Table 14.** Can the "No work no pay" policy be seen as a deterrent for potential future industrial action among university lecturers?

Responses	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
No	7	12.1
undecided	8	13.8
Yes	43	74.1

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The table above summarizes the responses from participants in the study on whether the 'no-work-no-pay' policy can be seen as a deterrent for potential future industrial actions among university lecturers. It can be inferred from the table that the majority of respondents said yes, that the 'no-work-no-pay' policy will serve as a deterrent for potential future industrial actions among university lecturers.

#### 4.1 Limitations of the Study

While the study provides valuable insights into the effects of the "No Work, No Pay" policy on university lecturers, certain limitations should be acknowledged to enhance the transparency and credibility of the research findings:

- **Limited Sample Size:** Although efforts were made to represent all faculties in the University of Lagos, the sample size of 58 interviewees may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and perceptions among the broader population of ASUU members. This restricts the generalizability of the findings.
- **Potential Response Bias:** Given the sensitive nature of industrial action and labor relations, participants may have provided socially desirable or emotionally charged responses, particularly regarding job security or political implications. Despite assurances of confidentiality, this may have influenced the openness or balance of responses.
- **Subjectivity of Qualitative Analysis:** Although reliability was strengthened through peer debriefing and inter-coder agreement, qualitative thematic analysis inherently involves researcher interpretation, which may introduce some level of subjectivity.
- **Single Institutional Context:** The study was confined to the University of Lagos, which may limit the applicability of the results to other institutions with different administrative structures, funding realities, or union dynamics.
- **Structured Interview Format:** While structured interviews allow for consistency across respondents, they may restrict the depth of responses compared to more open-ended or unstructured approaches that could capture richer narratives or emergent themes.

Despite these limitations, the study offers meaningful contributions to understanding the implications of the "No Work, No Pay" policy and provides a basis for further research and policy dialogue.

## 5. Summary and Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that the "No Work, No Pay" policy has had a multifaceted impact on university lecturers, particularly those affiliated with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). The analysis shows that while the policy may deter some lecturers from participating in future strikes, it has also significantly affected their morale, financial well-being, and willingness to engage in collective action. These findings can be better understood when examined through the lens of the unitary and pluralist theories as outlined in the theoretical framework.

The unitary theory, which views the organization as a cohesive family with shared goals and values, aligns with the government's enforcement of the "No Work, No Pay" policy. From this perspective, the government, acting as the employer, seeks to minimize

conflict and ensure harmony by discouraging disruptive industrial actions. The findings from Table 14, where 74.1% of respondents acknowledged the policy as a deterrent, support this view. The government's assumption appears to be that by withholding pay, academic staff will avoid strikes in the future, thus promoting stability in the university system.

However, the lived experiences of the lecturers, as captured in Tables 9, 11, and 12, contradict the ideal harmony envisioned by the unitary theory. Many respondents reported a demoralizing and financially distressing effect, leading to emotional fatigue, lack of motivation, and in some cases, attrition from academia. This suggests that while the policy may achieve short-term compliance, it may erode long-term commitment to the profession, which undermines institutional cohesion and productivity.

In contrast, the pluralist theory, which recognizes the organization as a collection of diverse interest groups with inherent conflicts, offers a more comprehensive lens for interpreting these outcomes. From this perspective, the conflict between ASUU and the federal government is expected and legitimate. Strikes are viewed as a mechanism for negotiating better working conditions. The findings in Table 5, where respondents identified unfulfilled agreements, poor pay, and a lack of trust as major drivers of industrial action, align with the pluralist emphasis on the need for continuous negotiation and recognition of worker rights.

The study also supports existing Nigerian literature, such as Enomah et al. (2010) and Ige (2014), who noted that the root causes of industrial action in Nigerian universities are primarily systemic, ranging from poor funding to government insincerity in honoring agreements. This was echoed in respondents' explanations in Table 5, where they cited issues such as inadequate facilities, poor welfare, and broken agreements. Moreover, Ecoma (2022) argued that the long-term consequence of withholding lecturers' salaries is a decline in the quality of education, a point corroborated by many respondents who expressed concerns about their ability to teach effectively under financial stress.

Comparatively, in international contexts, countries such as South Africa and India have similar legal provisions, yet they adopt more balanced negotiation mechanisms (Bhorat & Cheadle, 2009; Agarwal, 2020). In South Africa, for instance, while "No Work, No Pay" is allowed, the law emphasizes dialogue through collective bargaining and the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). The absence of such structured resolution mechanisms in Nigeria amplifies the adversarial relationship between the government and university lecturers.

Furthermore, while the Trade Disputes Act aligns the Nigerian policy with international labor norms, the



ILO Convention 98 on the right to organize and collective bargaining emphasizes fair negotiation over coercive deterrents. The heavy-handed enforcement of "No Work, No Pay" without constructive dialogue violates this principle, reinforcing the findings that many lecturers perceive the policy as punitive rather than reformative.

In summary, while the "No Work, No Pay" policy may align with unitary ideals and aims to deter industrial action, its implementation has instead highlighted the pluralistic nature of labor relations in Nigerian universities. The failure to address structural grievances through dialogue renders the policy counterproductive in the long term, leading to diminished morale, financial strain, and institutional instability.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The "No Work, No Pay" policy remains a deeply contentious issue shaping the landscape of industrial relations within Nigerian universities. Although designed to deter industrial actions and ensure academic continuity, this policy often backfires, intensifying labor disputes and exacerbating the very grievances it aims to suppress. For university lecturers, its implementation not only results in financial hardship but also undermines morale and institutional trust. As revealed in the interview responses, the policy has a dual effect: it may encourage caution among unions, yet it simultaneously hardens resistance, being perceived as punitive and dismissive of legitimate concerns over working conditions.

To address these complex dynamics, a shift from reactionary policies to proactive, inclusive, and sustainable conflict management strategies is necessary. The following concrete policy implications and recommendations are proposed:

- Institutionalize structured government–union dialogue mechanisms: Establish a standing Joint University–Government Consultative Council (JUGCC) that meets quarterly to anticipate, address, and resolve emerging issues. This body should have legal backing and involve neutral mediators where necessary.
- Develop a graded response alternative to "No Work, No Pay": Instead of total salary suspension, consider a *partial compensation model* during verified industrial actions—e.g., payment for administrative and research duties still performed. This approach acknowledges the multifaceted nature of academic work and mitigates financial strain without removing the disincentive to strike.
- Implement independent arbitration frameworks: Prior to any industrial action, both parties should be mandated to engage a neutral arbitration panel with

binding recommendations. This will reduce reliance on adversarial confrontations and foster a more cooperative resolution culture.

- Strengthen institutional funding and performance accountability: Long-term conflict reduction requires strategic investment in infrastructure, research, and staff welfare. The government should commit to a fixed percentage of the national budget for tertiary education, monitored through performance-based metrics that align funding with academic output and staff satisfaction.
- Enhance public engagement and transparency by launching a coordinated public awareness campaign that highlights the realities faced by academic staff and the systemic underfunding of universities. Greater societal understanding can build pressure on policymakers to prioritize education reform and de-escalate confrontational narratives around industrial action.

In summary, resolving the challenges posed by the "No Work, No Pay" policy requires a balanced approach that respects the rights of academic workers while maintaining institutional stability. Only through sustained dialogue, innovative policy reform, and mutual accountability can the Nigerian university system achieve industrial harmony and academic excellence.

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## Appendix 1

### Interview Schedule on Policy of "No work, no pay" and Industrial Action among Members of Academic Staff Union of University in University of Lagos

Sir/Ma

My name is Oluwabusayo Oni. I am a researcher and a PhD student from Department of Employment Relations and Human Resource Management, University of Lagos. I am investigating the effect of Policy of "No work, no pay" on Industrial Action among Academic Staff Union of University. Your support with regard to this study would be highly appreciated. Any information supplied by you will be used for academic purposes only.

Thank you for your support.

#### Section A: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your designation/cadre in this institution?
3. How long have you been working for this institution?
4. What is your age as at last birthday?
5. What is your marital status?

#### Section B: Research Questions

1. Are you aware of the Policy of No work no pay in Nigeria
2. How would you explain the No work, no pay policy in the context of industrial action among university lecturers?
3. In your opinion, why do university lecturers resort to industrial action?
4. What do you think are the main objectives or goals of implementing a No work no pay policy by Federal government of Nigeria on university lecturers during industrial action? Probe if it was during the last strike the policy was first implemented, if no ask when and its outcome
5. How does the No Work No Pay policy align with existing labor laws and regulations, and have any legal challenges or concerns been raised regarding its implementation?
6. What changes have you observed in the attitude of university lecturers towards industrial actions or any collective action since the introduction of the No Work No Pay policy?
7. Have there been any instances where the No Work No Pay policy has successfully deterred university lecturers from participating in industrial actions? Please share specific examples.
8. How does the No Work No Pay policy impact the financial well-being of university lecturers who participate in industrial actions?

9. How does the No Work No Pay policy impact the morale and motivation of university lecturers during and after an industrial action?
10. Do you believe the No work no pay policy has a significant impact on the duration of industrial action among university lecturers? Kindly explain
11. Can the "No work no pay" policy be seen as a deterrent for potential future industrial action among university lecturers, or does it merely postpone the underlying issues? Probe further if it can reduce the frequency of industrial action by academic staff of university
12. In your opinion, what are the overall effectiveness and impact of the No work no pay policy on industrial action among university lecturers?