

**ASUU Strike in Nigerian Universities: Implications for Students
in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria****Segilola, OLADEJO¹
Titilopemi, IJIMAYOWA²****Abstract**

The strike embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria has significant impact on different stakeholders. Hence, this study investigated the implication of ASUU strike on students in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, by examining the lifestyle of students during ASUU strike; its effects; and the coping strategies employed by the students during the strike. This study was conducted among undergraduates of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye. Cross-sectional survey design was used and 132 undergraduates were sampled using convenience sampling. Primary data were collected through the questionnaire, and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentage and frequency count.

Results showed that more students engaged in actively participating in social media and praying for the strike to be over, relaxation, and learning of skills while gardening, getting a certification course or interim job were the least engaged by students during the ASUU strike. The results above indicated that boredom was the highest effect of ASUU on students' lifestyle, followed by worry and by anxiety while mental issues was the least felt consequence of ASUU strike by students. The study also revealed that the students employed some coping mechanism such as praying for an end to the strike, social media usage, learning a skill and even sleeping to mitigate the implications of ASUU strike. The study then concluded that the disruption of academic activities during the ASUU strike made students engage in different lifestyles while overcoming its effects by using coping strategies.

Keywords: *Lifestyle, Undergraduates, ASUU Strike, Coping Strategies*

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Introduction

Over the years, the university system has played prominent roles in both developed and developing countries, including Nigeria. The system is responsible for addressing social, economic, and political issues confronting society. It engages in researches which are required to promote noticeable development and provide permanent solutions to existential issues in the society (Amadi & Urho, 2016). The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been at loggerhead with the Federal Government (FG) for over three decades on issues of importance to the union, culminating in industrial actions (Ebeguki, Omotayo, & Paul, 2016). Some of the major issues leading to the strike action include: inadequate pay, poor condition of service, under-funding of university system, and inadequate infrastructures in all government-owned universities, lack of university autonomy, and lack of university freedom, which result into poor quality teaching, inadequate research, lack of sponsorship and poor innovations in the university system. These problems are responsible for the incessant strike actions by ASUU (Okoli, Oguejiofor & Okoli, 2019).

Strike actions take different forms. At times, it occurs when the workers refuse to work but they picket outside the workplace to prevent people from carrying out any meaningful activities in their workplace or dissuading other workers from having any contractual business with their employer. For instance, Faculty not attending school, sometimes support students' strikes in order to attract media attention to the institution so as to publicize the probable grievances responsible for the strike actions organised by the students (Oladejo & Adenuga, 2021). The issues of strike actions have been in existence in Nigeria since the colonial era. So many industrial actions have been witnessed between the workers and their employers. The disagreement between the industrial actions is mostly due to pay and condition of work which mostly affects the students who have to sit at home and do next to nothing.

Revision of specialty literature

Literature Review

ASUU strike describes a situation in which lecturers stop teaching at the universities as a result of disagreement with the Federal Government. The union embarks upon strike to compel the government to alter policies which affect their members at their respective places of work. Strike action is not limited to Nigeria alone as it occurs in advanced countries such as USA, France, Germany, among other (Oladejo, 2022). Strikes are portion of social movement which appears in form of civil resistance campaign organised by labour unions to negotiate the condition of work of their members with employers. Hence, strike action is a part of industrial conflict used by ASUU to express their displeasure with the Federal government. The Strike action embarked upon by ASUU is a collective decision taken by all members, which is usually organised to shut all the universities campuses across the nation. This is done to compel the Federal Government to look into their demands and meet their yearnings (Amadi & Urho, 2015). During ASUU strike, lecturers refuse to work as they protest for poor conditions of or work. ASUU strike is now likened to other social vices such as: examination malpractice and corruption (Adisa & Oladejo, 2022). Like corruption, ASUU strike is considered as social problem which has eaten into the time of students, which in return had made it difficult for proper trained students within the specified time frame of study. Consequent upon this, the students are half-backed, ill-trained in character and learning (Oladejo, 2021). Parents and students now have divergent opinions on the culprit of the lingering industrial conflict between the ASUU and the Federal Government. The issue is so problematic that many people are losing confidence in the university system in Nigeria (Okeke, & Nnamdi-Eruchalu, 2023). Some group of people blame the incessant strike action on the Federal Government. This group maintains that lack of sincerity and commitment on the part of the government towards the education sector welfare is the main reason for the strike. Some believed that the radical approach of ASUU and

its confrontational method account for the recurring ASUU strike. Besides the diverse sentiments expressed by people, it has been observed that little research effort is geared towards this industrial crisis in the university system.

University lecturers in Nigeria have embarked on strike 14 times for a total period of 40 months in the last 19 years, beginning from 1999 to 2015 (Ebeguki, Omotayo, & Paul, 2016). This showed that the strike action by the university lecturers is incessant with high prevalence. Despite different mechanism put in place to resolve the lingering strike on the part of ASUU and the government, the dispute remains unresolved due to failure of the government to implement and honour the signed agreement between the two parties (Adisa & Oladejo, 2022). This incessant ASUU strike disrupts academic programmes of the students which discourage the students in terms of learning and studying. Consequent upon this, the study may engage sexual immoral behaviour, cybercrime, pool betting, avoidable gossips, watching pornographic contents and immoral and non-educating films, reading of comic materials for the purpose of entertainment instead of reading their books. If the strike continues for a long period, the students may lose touch with academic realities and may not be ready for academic activities. All these may have adverse effect on students' their learning abilities and capabilities (Adavbiele, 2015). Incessant ASUU strike occasioned by academic activities disruption may increase disappointment, depression, frustration, mental and psychological trauma, idleness, loss of motivation, and lack of preparation among students. This arises from the lack of conducive environment for effective learning in the university system, which has reduced human development and the general academic achievement evident from their reduced Grade Point Average (GPA). Although diverse group of individuals are affected by the ASUU strike; students are more affected by the strike action embarked upon by the strike compared other stakeholders. The strike action has disrupted academic activities in the university system, including research activities (Oladejo & Adenuga, 2023).

The strike actions also have an indirect impact on parents. They parents waste resources as a result of increase in the length of time their children would stay at home occasioned by the prolonged ASUU strike. This places burden on the already overstretched household economies. Low-income parents may not have all it takes financial wise to send their children to private universities. They are likely to show discontentment and dissatisfaction towards the continued stay of their children at home.

It is therefore pertinent to look at the implication of ASUU strike on students in Olabisi Onabanjo University with interests in their lifestyles during the strike, the effects and their coping strategies used by the students to counter the effects of ASUU strike.

Theoretical Review

Although a number of theories are relevant to the investigation of how the ASUU strike has affected educational advancement, conflict theory is the one that has to be looked at the closest. The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (TTSC) is another theory that lends credence to the research.

i. Conflict Theory

Karl Marx's conflict theory explains why conflicts arise in society when different groups or classes vie for scarce resources. Marx's notion of conflict centers on the struggle between the two main classes. The working class, or proletariat, and the ruling class, or bourgeoisie, who own and control the means of production, are always at odds. The main goals of the conflict between ASUU and the Nigerian Federal Government are the payment of outstanding salaries and the elimination of educational sector exploitation. The ASUU-Federal Government struggle is further supported by the idea of conflict theory, which holds that when the working class develops a consciousness of their status through class consciousness, they rise to overthrow the ruling class's dominance and exploitation through revolution to alter the status quo, which in this case is the ASUU strike. Karl Marx argues that workers first become aware of having grievances against capitalists, which makes them a class "in itself,"

and then they come to realise that they are part of the proletariat, a social class that is in opposition to the bourgeoisie and thus a class "for itself." According to Karl Marx, exploitation of one social group by another occurs in society; in a feudal system, lords exploit their serfs, and in a capitalist society, employers exploit their workers. Since one social group benefits at the expense of another, this leads to a fundamental conflict of interest between them. This conflict of interest must be resolved in the end so for this reason, the ASUU has been on an indefinite strike since lecturers and teachers in higher education have refused to be taken advantage of and deceived by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

It is possible to interpret the labour dispute between ASUU and the FGN as resulting from local issues like low salaries and working conditions as well as the Nigerian government's dishonesty in upholding agreements. The way that students lived and coped during the ASUU strike cannot be overstated because the union's problems with the government had an impact on a large number of students on a physical, mental, and even social level. As a result, students had to adjust to the new normal, which included attending lectures online, which some found difficult due to network issues, others who didn't have smartphones to access the classes online, and still others who complained about a lack of thorough explanations and other issues that could have affected their academic performance.

ii. Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (TTSC)

Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (TTSC), developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) is a framework that focuses on evaluation to assess harm, threat, and challenges leads to the process of coping with stressful events is known as the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping Theory. The degree of stress that external stressors cause in terms of thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behaviours depends on how the situation is assessed, which includes determining whether internal or external demands are greater than available resources and determining how well one can adjust when demands are greater than available resources. The idea also holds that stress can result in depressive and anxious sensations, altered physiology and

behaviour, acute and chronic illnesses, and an increased risk of drug, alcohol, and eating addictions.

Assessing the situation and determining whether internal or external demands exceed available resources, as well as one's capacity for coping in such a scenario, determines the degree of stress experienced as a result of external stressors in the form of thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behaviours. Additionally, according to the idea, stress can result in acute and chronic illnesses, behavioural and physiological changes, feelings of anxiety and sadness, and an increased risk of drug, alcohol, and food addictions. Coping is defined as the relationship between a person and their environment, which is influenced by subjective well-being, social functioning, and somatic health, as well as the importance the individual places on them at any particular time. This relationship is dynamic and is demonstrated by the various stages of an exam, where students must adjust to different coping mechanisms during the confrontational exam phase, the waiting period for results, and the prior warning period.

Coping behavior is a strategy frequently employed by those that are not handling their distress well or who are dealing with a mental health condition that is linked to their distress during the ASUU strike.

Research methodology

The study design is descriptive in nature with focus on 400 level undergraduates of Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria. It was limited to Undergraduates of Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, the students' lifestyles, ASUU strike and coping strategies and also focused on the influence of ASUU strike on students' lifestyles during the strike action. It is also limited to the coping mechanism of students during ASUU strike. They were chosen because they were the most affected by ASUU strike, as they were in their terminal years likely to be extended beyond the stipulated year of graduation. This article adopted a

convenience sampling technique in the selection of study's participants based on their availability and accessibility. The sample for this study was limited to all the 400 level students in the Department of Sociology for easy of data collection. Hence, the sample size of this study included 132 Sociology undergraduates of OOU, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State. The total target population for this study was five hundred and ninety-one (591) 400 level undergraduates in the Faculty of Social Sciences at OOU. The research instrument used was a self-designed questionnaire to collect data with four sections: socio-demographic information of the participant students; information about various lifestyles of students during ASUU strike; effects of ASUU strike on the lifestyles of students during ASUU strike; and the different coping strategies adopted by students mduring ASUU strike. Different scales were used to measure responses to different sections of the questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed descriptively using Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 17 (frequencities and percentages). The results obtained were presented in tables, charts, and graphs. This study made sure that all research operations were carried out with honesty, integrity, and respect for the privacy and rights of participants. It gave all interested parties precise and understandable information on the study's goals, methods, and possible effects. In order to guarantee that participants understood the study's objectives, their rights, and how their data would be handled, informed permission was also acquired.

Analysis and interpretation of the research data

This section presents the results of data analysis and discussion of crucial findings of this study. It contains the results of data analysis on the socio-demographic variables of respondents, research questions and discussion of the major findings in line with the conclusion of previous findings on the subject matter. In all, data were presented in

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tables and charts while analysis was done using frequency count and percentage analysis.

Results

Socio-Demographic Variables of Participants

The analysis of the socio-demographic data obtained on the gender, age, religion and ethnicity of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Data of Undergraduates

S/N	Details	Frequency count	Percentage (%)
1	Gender:		
	Male	54	45.6
	Female	64	54.4
	Total	118	100.0
2	Age:		
	16-20	29	47.3
	21-25	80	48.2
	26-30	9	4.5
	Total	118	100.0
3	Religion:		
	Muslim	44	37.9
	Christianity	67	56.2
	Traditional	7	5.9
	Total	118	100.0
4	Ethnicity:		
	Yoruba	85	62.7
	Igbo	26	35.5
	Hausa	7	1.8
	Total	118	100.0

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork (2023)

The result in Table 1 revealed that out of the 118 participants, 54(45.6%) were male students while 64(54.4%) were female students. This showed that more female participated in this study than female. Meanwhile, out of the 118 participants in this study, 29(24.9%) were

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16-20 years, 80(67.7%) were 21-25 years, 9(7.4%) were 26-30 years. This indicated that students between the ages of 21-25 years participated most in the study. In the same vein, 44(37.9%) were Muslim students while 67(56.2%) were Christian students. This result showed that Christian students participated more in the study than their Muslim counterparts. More so, out of the 118 students who participated in the study, 85(72.1%) were Yoruba, 26(22.1%) were Igbo while 7(5.9%) were Hausa. This result revealed that Yoruba students' participated the most in the study.

Analysis of Research Objectives

Objective One: Lifestyles of students during the ASUU strike

Table 2: Students' Lifestyle during the ASUU Strike

Lifestyles	Frequency Count	Percentage (%)
Exercises	68	57.4
Reading novels	53	44.4
Social media	109	92.6
Relaxation	92	77.9
Praying	100	84.1
Gardening	18	15.9
Learnt a skill	83	70.5
Focused on mental health	64	54.4
Got an interim job	32	27.1
Established a business	40	33.8
Got certification course	32	27.1
Travelling	70	59.3

Source: Researchers' Field Survey (2023)

Table 2 showed the results of different lifestyles of students during the ASUU strike. It was discovered that participation on social media (109; 92.6%) and praying (100; 84.1%) were the most prevalent lifestyle among students during ASUU strike, followed by relaxation (92; 77.9%); then learning a skill (83; 70.5%). This was closely followed by travelling (70; 59.3%), then by exercise (68; 57.4%). Meanwhile, getting an interim job and getting certification were the least lifestyle students adopted at 27.1% each followed by establishing business (33.8%). This indicated that more students engaged in

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actively participating in social media and praying for the strike to be over, relaxation, and learning of skills while gardening, getting a certification course or interim job were the least engaged by students during the ASUU strike. This result is depicted graphically in Figure 1.

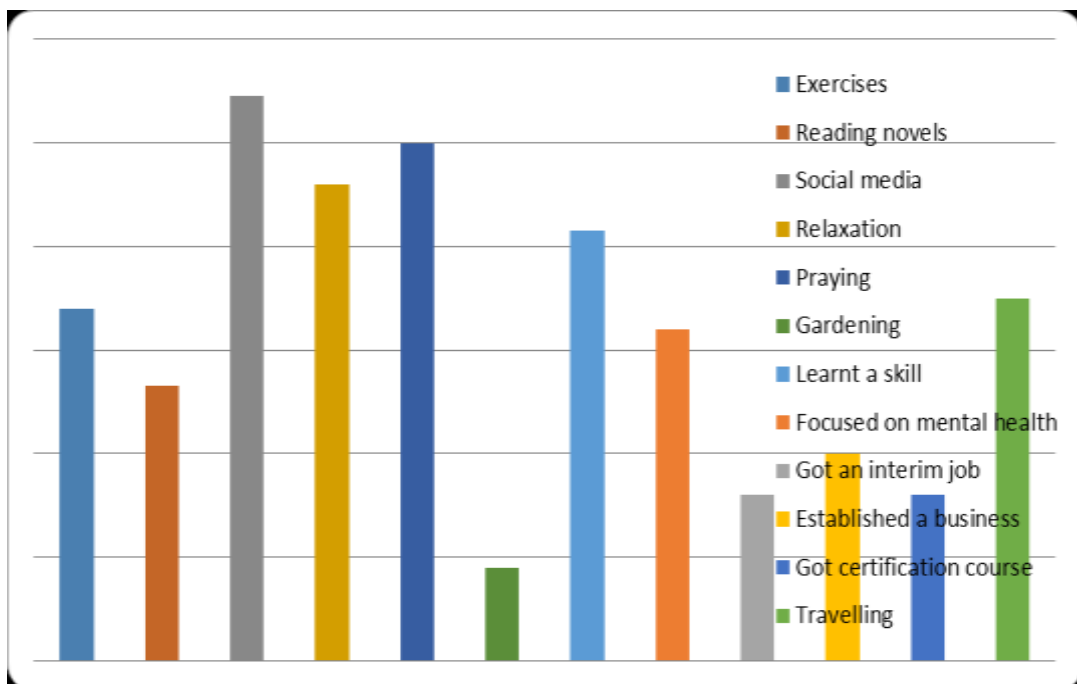


Figure 1: Bar Chart Showing Student's Lifestyle During ASUU Strike

Objective Two: Effect of ASUU strike on lifestyles of students in Nigerian Universities

Table 3: Effects of ASUU strike on Students' lifestyles in Nigerian Universities

Items	Frequency Count	Percentage (%)
Depression	53	44.4
Anxiety	61	51.5
Boredom	94	79.5
Sadness	55	46.9
Idleness	57	48.5
Mental Issues	33	27.9
Worry	83	70.5

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Source: Researchers' Field Survey (2023)

Table 3 revealed that 53(44.4%) of the 118 students who participated in this study were depressed during the ASUU strike, 61(51.5%) were anxious, 94(79.5%) were bored; 55(46.9%) were sad; 57(48.5%) were idle; 33(27.9%) had mental issues while 83(70.5%) were worried. This indicated that boredom had the highest occurrence; followed by worrying; then by anxiety; idleness; and sadness. Meanwhile mental issues had the least occurrence as ASUU strike effects on students' lifestyle. The result is also presented on Figure 2.

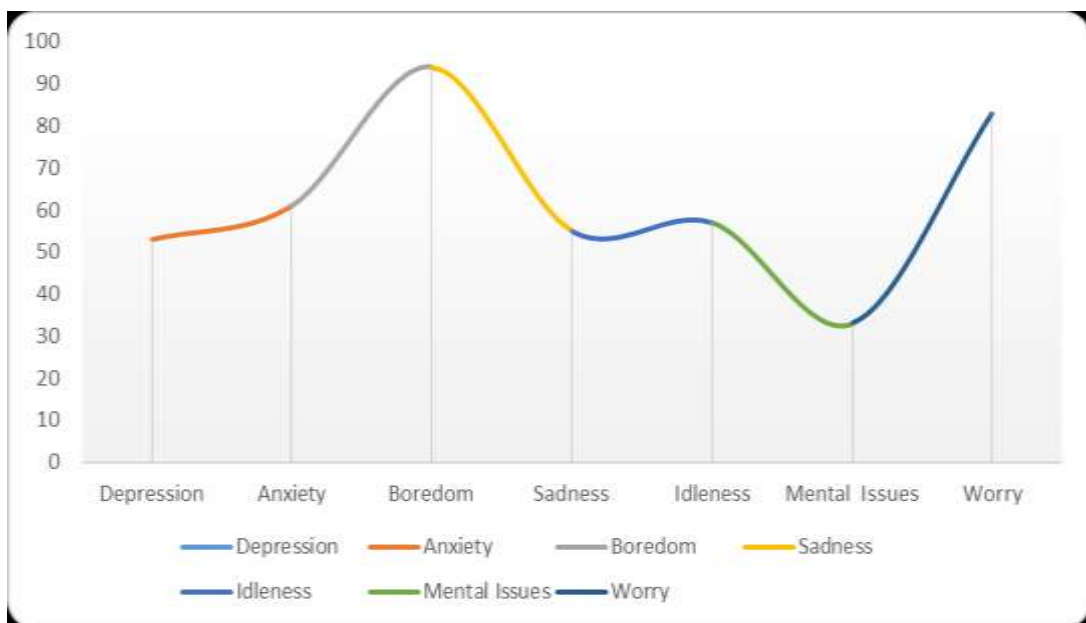


Figure 2: Line Graph Showing the Effects of ASUU strike on Students' Lifestyle

Objective Three: Coping strategies of students during ASUU strike

Table 4: Students' Coping Strategies during ASUU Strike

Items	Yes	%	No	%
Did exercise help you during ASUU strike?	43	36.7	72	63.3
Was learning a skill helpful?	105	88.5	13	11.5
Did social media platforms help you during ASUU strike?	110	93.8	8	6.7
Was praying helpful during the ASUU strike?	111	94.1	7	5.9
Did sleeping help you during ASUU strike?	91	77.7	27	22.3

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Source: Researchers' Field Survey (2023)

Table 4 indicated that 43(36.7%) of the respondents agreed that exercise helped them during the ASUU strike while 72(63.3%) disagreed. This showed that most students did not find exercise useful as a coping strategy during the ASUU strike. Also, 105(88.5%) agreed that learning a skill was helpful to them during ASUU strike while 13(11.5%) disagreed. This showed that learning skills as coping strategy helped most of the students overcome the effects of ASUU strike. Likewise, it was revealed that 110(93.8%) of the students in this study agreed that social media platforms helped them overcome the physical and mental problems associated ASUU strike while 8(6.7%) disagreed. More so, 111(94.1%) agreed that praying was helpful to them during the ASUU strike while 7(5.9%) disagreed. This indicated that the use of prayers had helped the students to during the recent ASUU strike to overcome their worry and anxiety. Meanwhile 91(77.7%) agreed that sleeping helped them during the strike while 27(22.3%) disagreed. This result was shown graphically in Figure 3 indicating

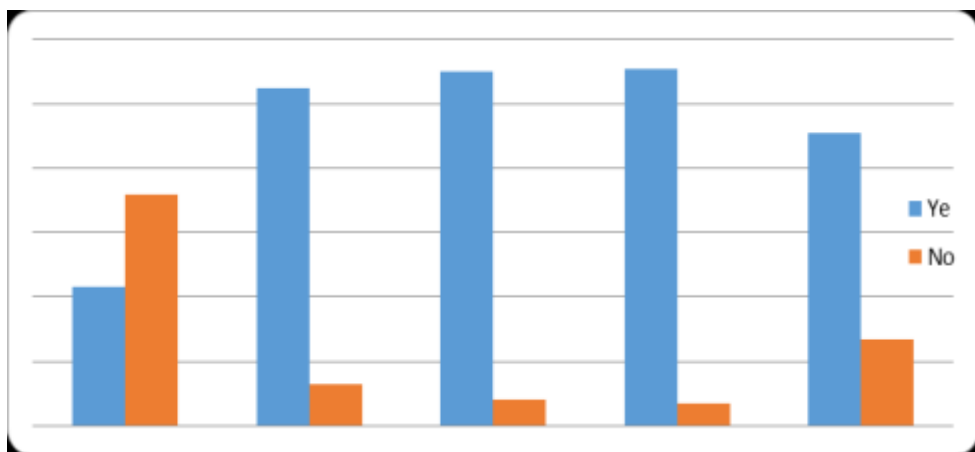


Figure 3: Bar Chart Showing Coping Strategies Adopted by Students during ASUU Strike

Discussion of findings

This study sociologically appraised the implications of ASUU strike on students in Olabisi Onabanjo University. It was designed to investigate

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the lifestyle of students during ASUU strike; examine the effects of ASUU strike on their lifestyles; and determine the coping strategies of students during the strike. The study adopted primary data obtained through the administration of questionnaire. Results were presented on tables, charts and graphs while frequency count and percentage analysis were used to analyse the research questions guiding this study.

The findings of this study indicated that more students engaged in actively participating in social media and praying for the strike to be over, relaxation, and learning of skills while gardening, getting a certification course or interim job were the least engaged by students during the ASUU strike. The findings corroborated the conclusions of Adisa and Oladejo, (2022); Okoli, Oguejiofor, and Okoli, (2019) and Amadi and Urho (2016) that students engaged in relaxation, praying and learn skills during the ASUU strike.

Results also showed that boredom was the highest effect of ASUU on students' lifestyle, followed by worry and by anxiety while mental issues was the least felt consequence of ASUU strike by students. This result corroborated the findings of Aduma and Njoku, (2022); Oyeboade and Obaka (2022); Nwipko, and Ojukwu, (2022) who maintained that ASUU strike contributed to worry, anxiety, sadness, idleness and stress issues among students. Lastly, it was discovered that praying for an end to the strike was the coping strategy mostly used by students, followed by social media usage, then by learning a skill while exercise was the least strategy adopted by students during the recently called off ASUU strike. This result is in tandem with the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping which states that there is necessity for social support as an internal protective element to get through an ordeal. This result however negated the view of Aduma and Njoku, (2022) who maintained that students engage more in exercise to reduce their stress level during the ASUU strike.

Conclusion

ASUU strikes in Nigerian universities have great effects on students' educational and academic pursuits. Asides from distortion of academic calendar and long graduation period, these strike actions are also found to affect their lifestyle and mental health. Ordinarily, the lifestyles of students during any academic sessions should be geared

towards learning and educational oriented activities where they engage in reading habits typical of them when the university system was on session. Consequent upon this, the study concluded that the disruption of academic activities during the ASUU strike made students engage in different lifestyles other than academic oriented lifestyles such as reading of novels, huge social media presence, praying, gardening, skills acquisition, application of interim job, establishment of businesses, obtaining course certification and travelling. Also, the students experienced some psychological issues like depression, anxiety, boredom, idleness, sadness, worry and other. However, coping strategies such as skill learning; social media usage, praying assisted them to overcome or mitigate the psychological consequences of the strike action which made their newly found lifestyles during the strike enjoyable and interesting.

The significance of this study therefore lies in the fact that it provided support to prior studies on lifestyles and coping mechanisms of students during ASUU strike. It has also added to the body of literature on the influence of ASUU strike on Nigerian educational development. The study is also quite important to students, parents, ASUU, and the government as it identified different psychological issues students faced during the ASUU strike and different strategies needed to reduce these distresses. This is to ensure that the students maintain their mental health during the strike action embarked upon by the university lecturer. To the parents, this study identified the possible roles of parents in the guidance and monitoring of their children during ASUU strikes. This is to ensure that parents keep a close eye on the activities of the students to avoid students engaging in unethical behaviour.

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