

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF STRIKES IN NIGERIA; A STUDY OF ANAMBRA STATE CIVIL SERVICE BETWEEN 1979 AND 1989

BY

JOSHUA O. NWEKE

Email: joshuanweke123@gmail.com
Department of Sociology/Anthropology,
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Abstract

Over the years, Nigeria experienced industrial conflicts which have given rise to strikes both in private and public work sectors. The worse hit is the Nigerian civil service. This is a sector where government whose responsibility is to cater for the wellbeing of her citizens is itself the employer. This study underscores the consequences of strike actions in Anambra state civil service between 1979 and 1989. The period under study cut across two types of political regimes: civilian and military regimes. The study utilized ex-post facto type of design since the events under study had taken place. Questionnaire distributed to elicit information from respondents which were certified fit for analysis were 162. Snowballing technique was applied. Results indicate that strikes within the period gave rise to negative consequences (14.8%) and positive consequences (14.2%). Results also reveal that strike has both positive and negative consequences (71%). Out of 13 numbers of strikes embarked upon by civil servants within the period, 123,832 workers were involved. The man days lost were 791,870 while man-hours lost were 5,437,220. The study recommends collective bargaining and employers' willingness to honour agreement as alternatives to strike actions in the Nigerian civil service. This will promote harmonious work relations and increase productivity in the civil service work sector.

Key words: civil, consequences, military, strikes.

1.0: Background and statement of the problem

Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in human history. It is prominent in homes, among individuals, friends, organizations, communities and nations at large. It is therefore an incontrovertible statement to state that the only place conflict does not exist is the grave yard (Dahrendorf 1959). Conflict can exist between stakeholders in a functional business especially in work setting. Trade dispute is usually associated with formal work organizations and employers and employees are stakeholders in trade dispute (Onyeonoru 2005). Dispute between employers and employees over matters relating to work conditions have been prominent in the world history.

Over the years, industrial conflict in Nigeria has remained a national issue. It has risen as much controversy and attention more than any other issue. For this reason many researchers and students of Industrial Relations have consistently paid attention to

it. This they do to find a panacea to this problem but the reverse seems the case. The livelihood of the Nigerian citizens gets threatened in the face of industrial strike.

Industrial strike is very destructive. It has adverse effect on employers', employees' and the society at large. It leads to decrease in productivity, loss of contract year, loss of profit resulting to loss of revenue, net earnings and idle equipment (Ubeku 1985). This study therefore, underscores the consequences of strikes in two political regimes in Nigeria within the civil service work sector between 1979 and 1989.

1.1: Research questions

This work is guided by the following research questions;

1. What role of government becomes inimical to the workers posture of idleness, laziness nonchalant and strike action?
2. What are the consequences of strikes in the Nigerian civil service between 1979 and 1989?

1.2: Objective of the study

This study is aimed at achieving the specific objective of examining the consequences associated with strikes in the Nigerian civil service between 1979 and 1989.

1.3: Significance of study

This study is significant for two important reasons: theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this work contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the study of industrial relations. On the practical aspect, this study will help in the regulation and possible prevention of the abnormalities created by industrial strikes in our society. It will be a policy guide to government and employers of labour in dealing with issues relating to labour unrest.

Literature review

2.0: Consequences of strike action.

Industrial strike action is associated with socio-psychological, economic, political, educational, religious and even cultural consequences (Onyeonoru 2002). The consequences of strike are reviewed in two areas: negative and positive consequences. This affects workers, the employers of labour, and the society at large.

2.0.1: Negative consequences of strike

On the negative consequences of strike, Ananaba (1969) states that in June 1947, there was a brutal shooting of the defenseless employees of the United African Company (UAC) in Burutu over employees demand for better working conditions. This made the workers to embark on strike in furtherance of wage demand. In the same light, Ubeku (1985) laments that there was indiscriminate shooting to death of 21 coal miners at Iva Valley Enugu in November 18th 1949. This led to the coming together of many trade unions like the Trade Union Congress, the African Civil Servants Technical Workers Union and the Nigerian National Federation of Labour. These unions formed one body in 1949 known as the Nigerian Labour Congress. The N.L.C. intervened in the incident at the Iva Valley Enugu. The unions felt that their salvation depended on their coming together hence the formation of N.L.C. Jordan (1974) states that this situation can be compared with what that happened in South Africa when African workers at Western Deep Levels one of the Wealthiest gold mines in the world stopped work for higher pay, and the

police shot twenty-five of them to death while eleven were fatally wounded.

Though there may be genuine reasons for workers to embark on industrial action, but the regularity of strikes in Nigeria is worrisome. Economic experts say that if the incessant strikes are not checked, Nigeria's quest to be among the top 20 economies by the year 2020 may not be realised. Anyanwu, (2013) says that generally, incessant strikes have adverse effect on the economy. According to her some of the effects are loss of national output, fall of Gross Domestic product (GDP) which was re-based, manpower loss and man-hour loss. She laments that strikes in various sectors have effect on the economy as they cause cost-push inflation and increase in the poverty level. She further comments "when there is strike, goods and services are not available, while demand will be high resulting to inflation. "More so, the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is affected, because you will not have investors trust if the system is not stable as a result of frequent strikes".

According to Yomi (2013), laments on the effects of the strike embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU). He states that the strike did not only affect the students and the lecturers, but also the country's economy, in the long run. Most of the problems that Nigeria is currently facing would have been better solved if the issues are properly addressed and the priorities set right. The academic calendar of the students has already been disrupted. This would mean the adjustment of their time table and a delay in their year of graduation. The man hours lost over this period would have to be paid for. Ajeyalemi (2013) also notes that strike also has a spiral effect on the nation's education and economic sector. Considering the duration of ASUU strike, he states that the total sum in salary for the lecturers within the striking period may run into billions of naira.

2.0.2: Positive consequences of strike

On the positive side, through industrial strike action, some demands of workers are met. In this direction, Ananaba (1969) confirms that the demand of the civil service union over a "war bonus" was granted to them when "war bonus" calculated at the rate of 30 per cent was paid in addition to their salaries.

Strikes are sometimes used to pressure governments to change policies. Occasionally, strikes destabilize the rule of a particular political party or ruler; in such cases, strikes are often part of a broader social movement taking the form of a campaign of civil resistance. Notable examples are the 1980 Gdańsk Shipyard or 1981 Warning Strike, led by Lech Wałęsa. These strikes were significant in the long campaign of civil resistance for political change in Poland, and were an important mobilizing effort that contributed to the fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of communist party rule in Eastern Europe (Aleksander 1970).

2.1: Theoretical framework

The theory of political economy is the theoretical framework for this study. This stems from the fact that the focus of this research is on the Nigerian civil service where the civil servants formed trade unions in pursuance of their common interests against government their employer.

Political economy as a theory was introduced about the beginning of the 17th century to describe the study of the problems of the princely states, which at the close of the Middle Ages in Europe replaced the feudal-ecclesiastical political order. An economist Adam Smith first presented

a comprehensive systematized study in political economy. He seemed to equate political economy with the treatment of "the nature and causes of the wealth of nations". This perspective was further developed by scholars like David Ricardo in 1817, John Stuart Mills in 1848 and many others. John Stuart Mills (1806 - 1873), viewed the stationary state as a situation perhaps superior to the growing economy characterized by groups struggling to advance. In his principle, he was pathetic to the poor and prescribed social policies such as universal education, limitation of population and profit sharing.

In line with the above, it may be argued that in any given society, groups exist with varied interests and aspirations. They adopt several measures of getting these interests and aspirations fulfilled. Conflicts arise among the groups as they struggle to protect their common interests. Conflicts within and between groups in society are as unavoidable as they are functional and they prevent accommodations and habitual relations from progressively impoverishing creativity. The clash of values and interests, the tension between what is and what some groups feel ought to be, the conflict between vested interests and new strata and groups demanding their share of power, wealth and status are products of vitality Coser (1957).

In the theory of organizations as systems, Silverman (1970) argues that organizations should be treated as open systems. Life within particular organization is affected not only by factors within that organization but also by factors outside that organization. In the Nigerian Civil Service therefore, pressures within and outside the structures of the civil service create room for the struggle for survival. The civil servants form trade unions to press for their survival. They compare themselves with workers in other sectors of the economy like the banking industry, the oil industry and other non-governmental organizations. They struggle to survive both economically, educationally and otherwise. In getting this done, the civil servants challenge the government - their employer, whose duty they believe it is to sustain the welfare of the citizens. Any attempt on the side of government to react negatively to the desires of the civil servants generates conflicts depending on the type of government. Hence, the issue of conflict between the civil servants and government will be understood using this political economy approach.

Methodology

3.0: Study design

The type of design used for this study is the ex-post facto design. This is the board type in which the investigator tries to investigate events after they must have occurred. This research deals with strikes in the Nigerian civil service in old Anambra State as from 1979 to 1989. The variables studied were strikes and the Nigerian civil service in which no one would be able to control the relationship between them since they are past events. In view of this, the methods used in collecting data for the study were:

1. Indepth analysis/study of relevant documents which deal with strike within the period under study;
2. The use of questionnaire schedule on civil servants and stakeholders of government within the study period.

3.1: Study population

This study was narrowed to only Anambra State between 1979 and 1989. The total work force population of the state civil service as at 1988 was fifty thousand and twelve (50,012) workers. The

choice of 1988 civil servant population statistics was pertinent since it was a year before the end of the study period. That was to ensure that every civil servant in the state within the period of study has the probability of being sampled whether retired or not.

3.2: Sample size and sampling techniques

The total population of civil servants in 1988 is fifty thousand and twelve (50,012). It is out of this number that the sample size for questionnaire distribution was drawn using sample fraction method calculated at $1/200$ of the total population, i.e. $S. F. = 1/200 \times 50012/1 = 250$ approximately. This was gotten from all the ministries, commissions and non-ministerial departments in which the population is up to 200 and above.

The sample size for questionnaire distribution was selected using snowballing technique. Respondents in each ministry, commissions and unit helped in identifying those who were in the civil service within the study period.

Table 3.2.1: Selected samples for the study

S/n	Names of ministries, departments or commissions	Total work force	Chosen sample
1.	Ministry of Agriculture	3502	18
2.	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning	3120	16
3.	Ministry of Health	6716	33
4.	Ministry of Commerce and Industry	1170	06
5.	Ministry of Education	938	05
6.	Ministry of Justice	350	02
7.	Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters	930	05
8.	Ministry of Information, Social Development, Youths Sports	687	03
9.	Ministry of Works and Transport	3997	20
10.	Government House	517	03
11.	Cabinet Office	1644	08
12.	Audit Department	386	02
13.	Judiciary	2342	12
14.	Civil Service Commission	128	-
15.	Local Government Service Commission	174	-
16.	Judiciary Service Commission	034	-
17.	State Education Commission	23377	117
	Total	50,012	250

Sources: Statistics unit of civil service commission, Enugu state, Nigeria.

3.3: Methods of data collection

Two major methods were used to generate data for this work. There were primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary source was through the use of the questionnaire. The unstructured type of questionnaire schedule was used to ensure flexibility (Obikeze 1990).

As an ex-post facto type of research, secondary data relevant to this work were gotten through in-depth analysis of documents dealing on strikes. These documents were sourced through

the library, statistical departments of the Federal Ministry of Employment Labour and Productivity Enugu, Statistical Departments of the state ministries, commissions, non ministerial departments and some trade union offices.

3.4: Data analysis and processing

Respondents' responses to the questions in the questionnaire schedule were analysed quantitatively using frequency distribution tables and per cent ages. Qualitatively, data generated as they affect opinions of respondents and review of related literature received content analysis. Statistical record of strikes within the research period which were obtained from the Federal Ministry of Employment Labour and Productivity Enugu were given statistical interpretations.

Results and discussions

The questionnaire was distributed to two hundred and fifty (250) respondents. These were people who were in the civil service in the study area between 1979 and 1989. When the questionnaires were distributed to two hundred and fifty respondents, only one hundred and eighty (180) returned theirs while seventy (70) did not. Some of those who did not return theirs complained of having not gotten time in over three months of receipt to fill the questionnaires. Some misplaced theirs while some were unwilling to complete them. Out of one hundred and eighty returned questionnaires, eighteen were invalid. This is because the years of their first employment fell beyond the research period 1979 and 1989. Also, ages of nine respondents among the eighteen rejected fell between twenty-five and twenty-nine years which raised doubt on the validity of their responses. Therefore, this analysis is based on a sample size of one hundred and sixty-two (162) respondents. This sample has a representative of both sexes, 78.4% were males while 21.6% were females).

The analysis is organized in two sections. Section "A" deals with demographic characteristics of respondents while section "B" deals with thematic issues.

Section A

4.0: Demographic characteristics of respondents

The demographic data of respondents were sought for. Information was gathered on their age, sex, marital status, educational qualifications and their positions in their work place. On their age and sex distributions, data generated are presented in table 4.0.1

Table 4.0.1: Age and sex distribution of respondents

Year	Male	Female	Total	Per cent age
30-34	21	3	24	15%
35-39	33	14	47	29%
40-44	32	4	36	22%
45-49	4	7	11	07%
50-54	16	-	16	10%
55-59	8	6	14	09%
60-64	9	1	10	06%
65-69	4	-	04	02%
Total	127	35	162	100%
Percentage	78.4%	21.6%	100%	100%

Field survey 2010

Data in table 4.0.1 indicates that 78.4% respondents were males while only 21.6% were females. This confirms the position of Udegbe (1997) that women reproductive roles, socio-cultural beliefs, education, glass ceiling barrier are some of the likely reasons for the imbalance of women in the formal work sector.

Data also shows that 29% respondents were within the age of thirty-five and thirty-nine. This is closely followed by 22 % respondents who fall between ages 40 and 44 years. The least represented 02% respondents that fall between the ages of 65 and 69 years. Table 4.1.2 contains data on the marital status of respondents.

Table 4.1.2: Respondents marital status

S/No.	Marital status	Number of respondents	Per cent age
1	Married	91	56
2	Single	40	25
3	Widow	31	19
	Total	162	100

Field survey 2010

In table 4.1.2, result indicates that 56% respondents were married while 25% were single. The least among them were widows that constitute 19% respondents. Also, observed was the stratification of respondents into different positions. Some were lowly placed in terms of ranking at work while some were highly placed. Those who were highly placed at their work place were those who occupy the positions clerk upwards while those below clerk's position were rated low. Table 4.1.3 shows the data appropriately.

Table 4.1.3: Respondents position in their work place

S/No.	Positions	No. Of respondents	Percentage
1	From clerk's level upwards	88	54
2	Below clerk's level	74	46
	TOTAL	162	100

Field survey 2010

Table 4.1.3 shows that 88 (54%) respondents were highly ranked officers while 74 (46%) respondents were lowly placed at work. The civil service is structured hierarchically placing workers at different strata. Power and authority flow hierarchically from up to the low ranking ones. This is the case of the civil service work sector.

Some of the respondents were clerks while some were teachers. Some were messengers while some were security men. Majority of these respondents gained employment with West African Examination Certificate and/or Teachers Certificate Grade Two (T.C.II). Some were First School Leaving Certificate holders while some did not possess any certificate. Results show that the greater percentage of respondents who were highly ranked had tertiary education. This group of respondents falls between the ages of 30 and 44 years. In table 4.1.4, the educational status of respondents is presented.

Table 4.1.4: Educational status of respondents

Educational level of respondents	No of respondents	Percentage
Second degree upwards	11	6.8%
First degree & HND	20	12.3%
N.C.E. and O.N.D	32	19.8%
T.C. II and W.A.E.C/ GCE.	50	30.9%
F.S.L.C.	29	17.9%
None	20	12.3 %
Total	162	100%

Field survey 2010

Data in table 4.1.4 shows that 30.9% respondents were T.C.II and W. A. E. C. holders. This was followed by 19.8% respondents that had N.C.E and O.N.D. certificates. Those who acquired their first degrees or HNDs and those who did not have any certificate were 12.3% respectively while the F.S.L.C (First School Leaving Certificate) holders were 17.9% only. The least in number is second degree holders and upwards. They constitute 6.8% respondents. This implies that majority of the people in the civil service work sector between 1979 and 1989 were WAEC/GCE holders. It's only few of the respondents that acquired higher certificates.

Section B

4.2: Consequences of strikes

Strike as a phenomenon is a social problem. It is associated with a lot of consequences. This

shall be viewed in three perspectives ie: its consequences on employers, the employees and the society in general. The consequences may be negative or positive. It is negative when it results in suffering and positive when it results in benefits. Table 4.2.1 portrays the negative consequences of strikes in the Nigerian civil service with reference to Anambra State between 1979 and 1989. This is analysed from the point of view of the value of labour and time lost in thirteen numbers of strikes within the period under review.

Table 4.2.1: Labour and time lost in strikes in Anambra State civil service between 1979 and 1989

S/ No	Date of strike	Trade unions involved and their employer	No of workers involved	Man-days lost	Man-hours lost
1	16:03:79	N.U.T. Verses Enugu L.G. Council	1000	3000	18000
2	16:03:79	N.U.T. Verses Awgu L.G. Council	950	2850	17100
3	10:08:79	N.U.T. Verses Local Govt. Service Commission	35000	385000	2310000
4	15:10:79	Printing and Publishing Workers Union of Nigeria Verses the management of Star Printing and Publishing Co. Enugu.	480	2400	19200
5	11:05:80	Splinters Union of N.U.T. Verses State School Service Commission.	5802	58020	348120
6	01:08:80	NULGE Verses Ministry of Local Government and Local Government Service Commission	13000	39000	312000
7	08:11:80	The Civil Service Technical Workers Union Verses the Ministry of Works	1000	1000	8000
8		J A C T U S Verses Anambra State Government	50000	150000	1200000
9	03:11:81	Association of Resident Doctors of Nigeria Verses the Federal Government.	200	400	3200
10	01:06:83	N.U.L.G.E Verses Enugu Local Government Council	1500	4500	36000
11	02-08-83	N.U.L.G.E. Verses Enugu Local Government Council	1700	1700	13600
12	15:11:84	Civil Service Technical Workers Union Verses Anambra State Civil Service Commission	200	1000	8000
13	20-09-85	N.U.L.G.E. Verses Ministry of Local Govt. and Local Govt. Service Commission.	13000	143000	1144000
		TOTAL	123832	791870	5437220

Sources: Extract from the statistics on strikes from the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity, Enugu.

Record of strikes in table 4.2.1 reveals that out of 13 strikes embarked upon by different trade unions between 1979 and 1989 in Anambra State civil service, 123,832 workers were involved. The Man-Days lost during the striking period is a total of 791,870 while Man-Hours lost is 5,437,220. From the above calculation, it is clear that the recorded strikes have serious negative effect on the economy of the Anambra State in particular and Nigeria in general.

Anyanwu, (2015) says that generally, incessant strikes have adverse effect on the economy. According to her some of the effects are loss of national output, fall of Gross Domestic product (GDP) which was re-based, manpower loss and man-hour loss. She laments that strikes in various sectors have effect on the economy as they cause cost-push inflation and increase in the poverty level. She further comments "when there is strike, goods and services are not available, while demand will be high resulting to inflation. "More so, the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is affected, because you will not have investors trust if the system is not stable as a result of frequent strikes". Ajeyalemi (2013) also notes that strike also has a spiral effect on the nation's education and economic sector. Considering the duration of ASUU strike, he states that the total sum in salary for the lecturers within the striking period may run into billions of naira.

On the opinions of respondents on whether strikes in the civil service have affected workers either negatively or positively. Their responses are contained in table 4.2.2.

Table 4.2.2: Responses from respondents on the consequences of strikes on workers

Views of respondents/variables	No of respondents	Per cent age
Strike has positive effect only	23	14.2%
Strike has negative effect only	24	14.8%
Strike has both positive and negative Effects	115	71.0%
Total	162	100%

Field survey 2010

A greater number of respondents as shown in table 4.2.2 were of the view that workers enjoy positively and suffer negatively whenever there is strike. Strike therefore has a mixed effect. This is the position of 71% respondents. In another dimension, some respondents stated that strike has negative effect only. In line with this, 14.8% respondents confirmed this. This is a fact when employees experience loss of jobs, loss of life and imprisonment of employees because of their involvement in strike action.

On the contrary 14.2% respondents certified that strike has only positive effect on employees. To this set of respondents, employees enjoy positively if strike leads to increase in their wages, promotions and good working relations as may be provide by their employers. This position confirms the views of Ananaba (1969) when he argues that the demand of the civil service union over a "war bonus" was granted to them when "war bonus" calculated at the rate of 30 per cent was paid in addition to their salaries. (Alexander 1970) corroborates the above result.

Conclusion

Results of this study reveal that strikes were seen to have ambivalent effects. The effects were both positive and negative values. They were of positive value when workers demands for better conditions of service were met. On the other hand, employees suffered the consequences of strike when some loss their jobs, life, entitlements in the process. Other Nigerians were affected negatively when their relations and loved ones were directly involved. Result indicates that a strike in a sector affects the activities of other sectors. For instance, a strike in the civil service is not independent of the activities of other organizations. An industrial conflict in an organization does have negative effect in other organizations. In Nigeria, there is always an increase in the inflationary rate any moment workers demand for wage increase is granted whether in the private or public work sector. Prices of goods and services do rise accordingly. The country suffers serious economic setback in the wake of any industrial strike action. Therefore, strike has adverse negative consequences on the economy of the society at large.

Recommendations

In view of this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Strict observance of collective bargaining in trade dispute resolution is necessary. Government should engage labour in collective bargaining as a means of resolving industrial conflict. For an industrial peace, harmony and growth, collective bargaining is undoubtedly superior to any other machinery of settling labour disputes. Though this is factual, it will be wrong also to admit that collective bargaining will eliminate completely the issue of labour unrest in formal organizations particularly in the Nigerian civil service.
2. Both employers and employees of labour should honour agreement in order to sustain industrial peace and harmony.

Reference

Ake, C. (1981) A Political Economy of Africa, Lagos: Longman.

Ajeyalemi, Duro (2013). Cited in <http://www.nigerianeye.com> on 2^{0th} March

Ananaba, Wogu (1969) The Trade Movement in Nigeria, Benin City: Ehtiope Publishing Corp.

Aleksander Smolar, "Towards 'Self-limiting Revolution': Poland 1970-89", in Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash (eds.), Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 127-43. This book contains accounts on certain other strike movements in other countries around the world aimed at overthrowing a regime or a foreign military presence.

Anyanwu, Sarah (2013) in News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), July 26th

Coser, L. A. (1957) Continuities in the Study of Social Conflict, Neu- York: The Free Press.

Dahrendorf, R. (1959), Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society, London: Routledge

and Kegan Paul.

Obikeze, D. S. (1990), Method of Data Analysis in the social and Behavioral Sciences, Enugu: Aut. Century Publishers.

Onyeonoru, P.I (2002).ASUU struggle; historical perspective, Ibadan University Press.

Onyeonoru, P.I (2005). Industrial conflicts in Nigerian Universities, Ibadan University Press.

Silverman David (1970) The Theory of Organizations, London: Heinemann (ed) Books Ltd. Trade Dispute Act of 1976 in Nigeria.

Ubeku. A. K. (1985) Personnel Management in Nigeria, Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Co.

Udegbe, J.B. (1997).Gender and leadership positions: images and reality, Faculty Lecture delivered in the Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Yomi Akinyeye, (2013) cited in <http://www.nigerianeye.com> on 20th March.