



Research Paper

# Trade Union Activism of Academic Staff and promotion opportunities: the case of South-South Universities in Nigeria,2015-2023.

ANAEDOBE, JOHNBOSCO OKECHUKWU. Ph.D  
Department Of Employment Relations And Human Resource Management  
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of trade union activism on promotion opportunities among academic staff in South-South universities in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. The study is guided by 4 research objectives and 4 research questions, centered on understanding the dynamics of union activism and its implications. It applies Social Exchange Theory (SET) to understand how union activities influence career advancement within this regional context. The theoretical framework posits that academic staff engage in activism to maximize rewards (better working conditions, career advancement) while minimizing costs (administrative backlash, delayed promotions). This study addresses a gap in the literature by conducting a comprehensive longitudinal analysis specifically focused on the South-South region. Methodologically, a mixed methods approach was adopted, integrating qualitative data from questionnaires with quantitative data on promotion rates and union participation. A sample size of 382 academic staff across six states was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, ensuring representation from diverse academic backgrounds and union roles, research questions were answered using percentage, mean and standard deviation ratings. Key findings reveal robust engagement in trade union activities among academic staff, focusing on issues like fair promotion policies and institutional autonomy. However, challenges persist regarding transparency in promotion processes and institutional barriers such as political interference and biased evaluations, which hinder career progression for union-affiliated staff. Based on these findings, recommendations include enhancing transparency in promotion criteria, decentralizing governance structures to foster autonomy, protecting academic freedom, and investing in support programmes for union-affiliated staff. These measures aim to improve fairness in promotions and mitigate challenges faced by academic unions in the South-South universities of Nigeria. It concludes that, while trade union activism effectively addresses critical issues in academia, significant institutional reforms are essential to create equitable environments conducive to academic staff's professional growth and well-being in South-South Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Trade Union Activism, Academic Staff, Promotion Opportunities

Received 07 July, 2024; Revised 19 July, 2024; Accepted 21 July, 2024 © The author(s) 2024.

Published with open access at [www.questjournals.org](http://www.questjournals.org)

## I. INTRODUCTION

Trade union activism among academic staff in Nigeria plays a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape and has significant implications for promotion opportunities within the nation's higher education system. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), founded in 1978, is the primary organization representing university lecturers in Nigeria. ASUU has a long history of activism, engaging in numerous strikes and protests to demand better working conditions, improved funding for education, academic freedom, and the autonomy of universities (Jega, 1994). This activism is driven by a persistent belief that the quality of education is intrinsically linked to the welfare of academic staff and the infrastructure within which they operate. ASUU's activism is often marked by prolonged industrial actions aimed at drawing attention to the chronic underfunding of universities, deteriorating infrastructure, and the need for better remuneration for academic staff. For instance, ASUU's strikes in 1992, 2009, and more recently in 2020, highlight ongoing grievances regarding the failure of successive governments to honor agreements on funding and conditions of service (Onyeonoru, 2008; Odiagbe, 2016). These actions, while disruptive, are seen as necessary measures to compel the government to address the

longstanding issues facing the higher education sector. The activism of ASUU and other academic unions often brings them into conflict with government authorities and university administrations. This adversarial relationship can have significant implications for the career trajectories of individual academics. Active participation in union activities can sometimes be viewed unfavorably by university administrators, potentially affecting an academic's promotion prospects (Mbah, 2014). The fear of victimization or being overlooked for promotion can discourage some academics from participating in union activities, despite their alignment with the union's objectives. Promotion in Nigerian universities typically follows a structured process that considers academic qualifications, research output, teaching experience, and service to the university community. However, this process can be influenced by various non-academic factors, including political affiliations, administrative biases, and involvement in union activities (Ekundayo & Adedokun, 2009). While union activism can enhance an academic's visibility and reputation as a leader and advocate for educational improvement, it can also lead to negative repercussions if perceived as confrontational by university authorities. Research indicates that union activists often face delays in their promotion due to their perceived antagonism towards the administration (Odiagbe, 2016). This is particularly prevalent in environments where administrative decisions are influenced by personal relationships and political considerations rather than objective academic criteria (Mbah, 2014). In some cases, vocal and active union members may find themselves marginalized or subjected to punitive measures, which can stymie their career progression. The broader socio-economic and political context in Nigeria also plays a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of trade union activism and promotion opportunities. Nigeria's higher education sector has been plagued by inconsistent and inadequate funding, political instability, and economic challenges, all of which impact the overall functioning of universities (Ogunsanwo, 2020). These factors create an environment where union activism becomes a necessary tool for advocacy but also one fraught with risks. Furthermore, the Nigerian government's approach to managing industrial disputes with academic unions often exacerbates tensions. Rather than addressing the root causes of discontent, government responses have frequently involved attempts to suppress union activities, leading to a cycle of strikes and negotiations without lasting resolutions (Olalekan, 2017). This volatile environment not only affects the academic staff's morale and productivity but also their career development prospects. Understanding the issues surrounding trade union activism and promotion opportunities in Nigerian universities requires a nuanced approach that considers the interplay of various factors. While ASUU and other academic unions play a critical role in advocating for better conditions and standards within the higher education sector, their activism can also impact the career progression of individual academics. The influence of administrative biases, political considerations, and the broader socio-economic context must be acknowledged in any comprehensive analysis of these issues. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders, including the government, university administrations, and academic unions, to create a more supportive and equitable environment for academic staff. The ennsence of the study is to examine the Trade Union Activism of Academic Staff and promotion opportunities: the case South-South Universities in Nigeria, 2015-2023.

### **Statement of problem**

The interaction between trade union activism and promotion opportunities among academic staff in South-South universities in Nigeria, encompassing states such as Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, and Edo from 2015 to 2023, presents a significant challenge. During this period, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and other academic unions have actively engaged in advocating for improved working conditions, adequate funding, and enhanced infrastructure within these institutions. However, their activism has frequently led to strained relations with university administrations, creating a contentious environment where union-affiliated academics may face discrimination or delayed career progression.

The political and administrative landscape in the South-South region further complicates promotion opportunities for academic staff involved in union activities. Biases within university administrations, coupled with broader socio-economic challenges such as inconsistent government funding and political instability, contribute to an uncertain career path for union activists. Consequently, despite their academic qualifications and contributions to research and teaching, some academic staff find themselves overlooked for promotions, impacting their professional development and morale. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for identifying systemic barriers and inequalities within South-South universities that hinder the full potential of academic staff and detract from the overall quality of higher education in Nigeria. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced approach that considers the interplay of institutional policies, political influences, and union dynamics to foster a more equitable and supportive environment for academic professionals in the region. The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of trade union activism on promotion opportunities among academic staff in South-South universities in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

1. analyze the patterns and frequency of trade union activism among academic staff in South-South universities over the study period.
2. assess the perceptions of academic staff regarding the fairness and transparency of promotion processes in South-South universities.
3. examine the specific challenges faced by union-affiliated academic staff in South-South universities regarding career progression and promotion opportunities.
4. explore the institutional factors and administrative practices within South-South universities that influence promotion outcomes for union activists.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the patterns and frequencies of trade union activism among academic staff in South-South universities during the study period?
2. How do academic staff perceive the fairness and transparency of promotion processes in South-South universities?
3. What are the specific challenges experienced by union-affiliated academic staff in South-South universities concerning career progression and promotion opportunities?
4. What institutional factors and administrative practices within South-South universities influence promotion outcomes for union activists?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a sociological and psychological framework that explains social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchanges between individuals or groups. The theory posits that people make decisions based on weighing the potential benefits and costs of their actions, aiming to maximize rewards and minimize costs in their social interactions (Blau, 1964). SET emerged primarily from the work of early scholars like George Homans and Peter Blau, and has since evolved into a foundational concept in understanding human behavior in various social contexts. George Homans, an American sociologist, is often credited as one of the founding fathers of Social Exchange Theory. In his seminal work "Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms" (1961), Homans argued that human behavior is based on a system of rewards and punishments derived from social interactions. He proposed that individuals engage in behaviors that yield positive outcomes or rewards, while avoiding those that result in negative consequences (Homans, 1958). Peter Blau further developed SET by emphasizing the importance of social structure and exchange processes in shaping social relationships. Blau's work, particularly in "Exchange and Power in Social Life" (1964), expanded the theory to include power dynamics and the distribution of resources within social networks. He highlighted how exchanges of resources (such as information, support, and material goods) influence the cohesion and stability of social groups (Blau, 1964).

### **Principles of Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory is based on several key principles that underpin its understanding of human behavior and social relationships:

- i. **Rational Choice:** Individuals are seen as rational decision-makers who assess the costs and benefits of their actions. They are motivated to maximize rewards (positive outcomes) and minimize costs (negative outcomes) in their interactions with others.
- ii. **Mutuality:** Exchange relationships involve mutual give-and-take, where individuals expect reciprocity and fairness. The principle of reciprocity suggests that people tend to repay others in kind for what they receive, fostering trust and cooperation (Gouldner, 1960).
- iii. **Comparison Level (CL):** Individuals evaluate their satisfaction with an exchange relationship based on their comparison level, which is influenced by their past experiences and expectations. If the outcomes of an exchange meet or exceed their comparison level, they perceive the relationship as beneficial and satisfying.
- iv. **Comparison Level for Alternatives (CLalt):** People also consider their alternatives when evaluating an exchange relationship. The comparison level for alternatives refers to the perceived outcomes available from alternative relationships or courses of action. If individuals have attractive alternatives, they may be less satisfied with their current exchange relationship.
- v. **Power and Dependence:** SET acknowledges the role of power dynamics in shaping exchange relationships. Power refers to the ability to influence others' outcomes or actions, while dependence reflects one's reliance on another party for desired resources or outcomes (Emerson, 1962).

### **Application of the Social Exchange Theory to the Study**

Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a valuable framework for analyzing the dynamics of trade union activism among academic staff and its implications for promotion opportunities in South-South universities in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. This theoretical perspective focuses on the rational decision-making processes of individuals within social relationships, emphasizing the exchange of resources, benefits, and costs.

#### **Principles Applied:**

- i. **Rational Choice and Motivations:** Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals engage in behaviors that maximize rewards and minimize costs. In the context of academic staff involved in trade union activism, their participation can be understood as a rational choice aimed at securing better working conditions, increased funding for universities, and improved infrastructure (Homans, 1958). By actively participating in union activities, academic staff seek to influence university administrations and government policies to meet their demands, thereby enhancing their professional environment and career satisfaction.
- ii. **Reciprocity and Trust:** According to SET, exchange relationships are based on reciprocity, where individuals expect mutual benefits and fairness. Academic staff involved in trade union activism expect that their efforts will lead to improvements in their working conditions and career opportunities (Blau, 1964). They rely on trust and solidarity within the union to collectively negotiate for better promotion processes and outcomes, fostering a sense of collective action and support.
- iii. **Comparison Levels and Alternatives:** The theory also considers comparison levels (CL) and comparison levels for alternatives (CLalt) in evaluating satisfaction with exchange relationships. Academic staff compare their current promotion opportunities and career prospects with their expectations and alternatives available within and outside the university system (Emerson, 1962). If union activism yields positive outcomes such as fairer promotion criteria or improved policies, academic staff are likely to perceive the union as beneficial and continue their active participation.

### **Application to the Case of South-South Universities**

In South-South universities in Nigeria, academic staff face specific challenges related to promotion opportunities influenced by trade union activism. The theory helps elucidate how union-affiliated academics weigh the benefits and costs of their involvement in activism, considering potential risks such as strained relationships with university administrations or delays in promotion (Molm, 2010). Trade union activism in this region often revolves around pressing demands for adequate funding, better infrastructure, and policies that support academic freedom. The activism aims to balance the perceived costs (potential career risks, administrative backlash) with anticipated benefits (improved working conditions, enhanced career opportunities) for academic staff. By examining these dynamics through the lens of Social Exchange Theory, researchers can better understand the strategic decisions and motivations of academic staff involved in union activities. Social Exchange Theory offers a robust framework for analyzing the complexities of trade union activism among academic staff and its impact on promotion opportunities in South-South universities in Nigeria. By applying SET principles, researchers can explore the rational calculations, reciprocity dynamics, and decision-making processes that shape academic staff's participation in union activities and their outcomes in terms of career advancement.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW: EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Olusegun Ajala's study "Trade Union Activities and Career Development of Academic Staff in Nigerian Universities: A Case Study of ASUU" (2018) investigated the main trade union activities of ASUU members, their influence on career development among academic staff, and the perceived benefits and challenges of union activism in career progression. Conducted in Nigerian universities, the study utilized Social Exchange Theory as its theoretical framework and employed qualitative interviews and content analysis. Findings suggested that while union activities enhance visibility, they may also lead to administrative friction affecting promotions. The study concluded that union activism is crucial for career development but entails risks for academic careers, recommending advocacy for institutional support and fair policies for union-affiliated staff.

Chukwudi Nwabueze's research titled "Impact of ASUU Strikes on Academic Staff Promotion in South-South Universities" (2020) addressed four objectives: examining the impact of ASUU strikes on promotion processes in South-South universities, exploring academic staff views on strike actions and career progression, identifying institutional factors influencing promotion outcomes during strike periods, and analyzing implications for policy and practice in university governance. Conducted in South-South universities in Nigeria, the study applied Institutional Theory and Social Exchange Theory, employing mixed methods including surveys and interviews. Findings revealed that strikes delay promotions, perceptions on effectiveness vary, and institutional support is crucial. The study concluded that strikes affect career trajectories and

recommended policy reforms to ensure equitable outcomes, emphasizing the need to strengthen governance structures and dialogue between unions and administrations.

Ifeoma Okoye's study "Role of Union Leadership in Academic Staff Promotion: A Study of ASUU Leaders" (2019) focused on two objectives: examining how leadership within ASUU influences promotion opportunities for academic staff and exploring perceptions of ASUU leaders regarding their role in career development. The research was conducted among ASUU leaders in selected South-South universities, utilizing Transformational Leadership Theory as its theoretical framework and employing a case study approach involving interviews and document analysis. Findings indicated that leaders facilitate advocacy but encounter administrative challenges, highlighting their role in promoting member welfare. The study concluded that effective leadership enhances advocacy and emphasized the importance of administrative support, recommending leadership training and fostering collaboration for effective representation.

Blessing Eze's study "Gender Differences in Union Activism and Promotion Opportunities among Academic Staff in South-South Universities" (2021) explored three objectives: analyzing how gender differences influence union activism among academic staff, assessing promotion outcomes for male and female academic staff involved in unions, and examining implications for gender equity in promotion policies. Conducted among academic staff (both male and female) in South-South universities, the study utilized Gender and Organizational Theory and employed quantitative survey methods and focus groups. Findings indicated that gender impacts activism intensity, revealing disparities in promotion rates. The study concluded that gender-sensitive policies are essential to promote inclusive union participation and recommended addressing gender biases and supporting women in leadership roles.

Emmanuel Ugwueze's research "Impact of Government Policies on Union Activism and Promotion Opportunities: Perspectives from South-South Universities" (2017) addressed four objectives: exploring how government policies affect union activism among academic staff, assessing promotion outcomes during policy changes or funding fluctuations, identifying challenges faced by academic staff during policy shifts, and recommending policy enhancements to bolster union influence and promotion opportunities. The study, conducted during policy changes in South-South universities, utilized Policy Change Theory and employed comparative case study and policy analysis methodologies. Findings suggested that policies influence activism intensity and promotion stability, advocating for policy alignment, stable funding, and consistent policies to support equitable outcomes. Recommendations included engaging policymakers and establishing advocacy networks to strengthen union influence.

Stella Okafor's study "Perceptions of Academic Staff on Union Activism and Promotion Opportunities: A Case Study of Delta State University" (2016) investigated three objectives: exploring how academic staff perceive union activism at Delta State University, examining promotion outcomes for union-affiliated staff, and identifying factors influencing staff perceptions and experiences with union activities. Conducted at Delta State University, Nigeria, the study utilized Stakeholder Theory and employed qualitative interviews and focus groups. Findings revealed mixed perceptions on activism, varied promotion outcomes, and noted administrative challenges. The study concluded with recommendations to improve communication, address staff concerns, and enhance dialogue between unions and administrations to foster transparency and strengthen relations.

Chinedu Okafor's study "Effectiveness of Union Negotiations on Promotion Criteria: Perspectives from Academic Staff in South-South Universities" (2018) addressed two objectives: assessing the effectiveness of union negotiations in influencing promotion criteria and exploring perceptions of academic staff regarding the fairness and transparency of promotion processes. Conducted among academic staff in selected South-South universities, the study employed Negotiation Theory and utilized mixed methods including surveys and interviews. Findings indicated that negotiations impact criteria and perceptions on fairness, highlighting the need for policy reforms. Recommendations included promoting dialogue and establishing clear promotion guidelines to enhance procedural fairness.

Abigail Okonkwo's study "Impact of Union Activism on Career Satisfaction and Development: Perspectives from ASUU Members in South-South Universities" (2019) explored three objectives: examining how union activism influences career satisfaction among ASUU members, assessing career development outcomes for active union members, and identifying implications for organizational support and policy advocacy. Conducted among ASUU members in South-South universities, the study employed Career Development Theory and utilized longitudinal survey methods and interviews. Findings indicated that activism enhances satisfaction, with varied career paths, and emphasized the critical role of organizational support. The

study concluded with recommendations to strengthen union resources and promote career development programmes, advocating for policy reforms to support effective union engagement.

### **Summary of Literature Reviewed and Identified Gap**

The reviewed literature on trade union activism among academic staff in Nigerian universities, particularly focusing on the South-South region from 2015 to 2023, reveals several key findings and insights. Studies such as those by Olusegun Ajala (2018), Chukwudi Nwabueze (2020), Ifeoma Okoye (2019), and others, consistently highlight the significant role of trade unions, particularly ASUU, in advocating for academic staff's career development and promotion opportunities. These studies underscore the influence of union activities on visibility, advocacy, and the challenges academic staff face due to administrative frictions and policy fluctuations. Key themes include the impact of ASUU strikes on promotion delays, gender disparities in union activism and promotion outcomes, the role of leadership in promoting member welfare, and the influence of government policies on union activities and promotion stability. Theoretical frameworks such as Social Exchange Theory, Institutional Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Policy Change Theory have been applied to understand these dynamics. However, a critical gap in the literature persists concerning a comprehensive, longitudinal study specifically focusing on the South-South universities in Nigeria over the period 2015-2023. Existing studies provide valuable snapshots and insights but often lack a longitudinal perspective that can capture trends, changes in policies, and their sustained impacts on union activism and promotion outcomes. Furthermore, there is a need to delve deeper into specific institutional contexts within the South-South universities to understand localized factors influencing union activities and promotion opportunities. Therefore, the identified gap necessitates a detailed empirical study that not only examines the historical trends and impacts of union activism on promotion opportunities but also explores the nuanced interactions between union activities, institutional dynamics, and policy environments within the South-South universities of Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. Such a study would provide comprehensive insights essential for policy formulation, institutional governance improvements, and enhancing the effectiveness of union advocacy for academic staff.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

The study on trade union activism and promotion opportunities in South-South Universities in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023 adopted a mixed methods research design. Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and questionnaire were employed to gather detailed insights from academic staff, union leaders, and university administrators across Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Edo states. These methods illuminated perceptions, experiences, and factors influencing union activism and promotion outcomes. Additionally, quantitative methods like surveys were used to collect structured data on promotion rates, demographics, and union participation, enabling statistical analysis to identify patterns and trends across these states. By triangulating qualitative and quantitative data, the study enhanced its robustness and validity, offering a comprehensive examination of how union activism impacts promotion opportunities while considering contextual differences in the South-South region of Nigeria. The populations of the study is 8,180 which constitutes members of academic staff and of 8 selected universities in the south south. The sample size was drawn using the Taro Yamane formula (1967). The formula is stated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n= the sample size

N= Population size

e= level of significance, which is 0.05

Given the above formula, the sample size is computed as follows:

$$n = 8,180$$

$$1 + 8,180 (0.05)$$

$$n = 8,180.$$

$$\frac{1 + 8,180 (0.0025)}{n = 8,180}$$

$$n = 8,180$$

$$\frac{1 + 8,180 \times (0.0025)}{n = 8,180}$$

$$n = 8,180$$

$$\frac{1 + 20.45}{n = 8,180}$$

$$n = 382$$

Based on Taro Yamane formula computed above, the size drawn for the study stands at three hundred and eighty-two (382). The questionnaires were administered using the purposive sampling technique, questionnaires

were distributed to the selected academic staff members and ASUU representatives actively participating in appointment and promotion committees at their respective universities. Selection criteria include current committee membership, years of academic experience, leadership roles within ASUU, and expertise in promotion criteria and policies. This approach ensures that participants chosen have direct involvement and specialized knowledge, enhancing the study's capacity to gather insightful data on union activism, promotion opportunities, and committee dynamics within South-South universities in Nigeria.

The researcher structured the data collection process for the study on Trade Union Activism of Academic Staff and Promotion Opportunities: The Case of South-South Universities in Nigeria, 2015-2023. The data collection instrument comprised a questionnaire divided into two sections. Section A gathered demographic information from respondents. Section B consisted of 25 questionnaire items distributed as follows:

1. Items 1-5 were designed to address the first research question
2. Items 6-10 were tailored to address the second research question
3. Items 11-15 were formulated to address the third research question
4. Items 16-20 were developed to address the fourth research question

This study investigates the relationship between Trade Union Activism (independent variable) and Promotion Opportunities (dependent variable) among academic staff in South-South Universities in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. Trade Union Activism is operationalized using indicators such as participation in union activities, leadership roles in ASUU, advocacy for fair promotion policies, and engagement in collective bargaining. Promotion Opportunities are measured based on academic staff members' perceptions of career advancement, promotion rates, and administrative support for promotions.

The variables in the study, Trade Union Activism and Promotion Opportunities, are assessed using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire employs a 4-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree. This scale allows respondents to express their opinions on the extent of union activism and the availability of promotion opportunities within their academic careers at South-South Universities in Nigeria. The research questions were answered and data were analyzed using percentage, mean ratings data analysis.

#### IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

##### Outcome of Questionnaire Distribution

Copies of questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage %
Administered	382	100
Retrieved	370	97%
Number not returned	15	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

Based on the data from the questionnaire distribution administered: A total of 382 questionnaires were distributed to participants. Retrieved: Out of the 382 questionnaires distributed, 370 were retrieved after completion, accounting for 97% of the distributed questionnaires. Number not returned: 15 questionnaires were not returned, representing 3% of the total distributed.

##### ANALYSIS

**Research question one: What are the patterns and frequencies of trade union activism among academic staff in South-South universities during the study period?**

**Table 2: Summary of descriptive statistics of the mean standard deviation and percentage on the patterns and frequencies of trade union activism among academic staff in South-South universities during the study period?**

S/N	Items	Strongly Agree f(%)	Agree f(%)	Disagree f(%)	Strongly Disagree f(%)	Mean (x)	STD	Total	Remarks
1	Academic staff in our university resort to strikes when faced with issues such as salary delays or non-implementation of agreements.	190 (51.4%)	110 (29.7%)	40 (10.8%)	30 (8.1%)	3.24	0.92	370	Strong agree
2	Our trade unions frequently advocate for increased funding to enhance university infrastructure, research	150 (40.5%)	130 (35.1%)	60 (16.2%)	30 (8.1%)	3.08	0.86	370	Strong agree

S/N	Items	Strongly Agree f(%)	Agree f(%)	Disagree f(%)	Strongly Disagree f(%)	Mean (x)	STD	Total	Remarks
	facilities, and academic resources.								
3	During policy changes affecting academic freedom or curriculum, our trade unions organize protests or public campaigns.	120 (32.4%)	150 (40.5%)	70 (18.9%)	30 (8.1%)	2.97	0.87	370	Strong agree
4	Trade union activism in our university periodically focuses on defending academic autonomy against interference from governmental or administrative bodies.	160 (43.2%)	130 (35.1%)	50 (13.5%)	30 (8.1%)	3.13	0.91	370	Strong agree.
5	Trade unions consistently advocate for improved welfare packages, healthcare benefits, and retirement plans for academic staff.	200 (54.1%)	110 (29.7%)	40 (10.8%)	20 (5.4%)	3.32	0.84	370	Strong agree

**Source: Field Survey, (2024).**

Trade union activism among academic staff in South-South universities is characterized by strong engagement and advocacy, as evidenced by high agreement rates and mean scores in various areas: Strikes: 81.1% of academic staff support strikes for issues like salary delays (mean score 3.24). Funding Advocacy: 75.6% support increased funding for university resources (mean score 3.08). Policy Protests: 72.9% engage in protests during policy changes (mean score 2.97). Autonomy Defense: 78.3% defend academic autonomy (mean score 3.13). Welfare Advocacy: 83.8% advocate for improved welfare packages (mean score 3.32).

**The finding of research question1:** suggest that trade union activism among academic staff in South-South universities is proactive and focuses strongly on issues related to salaries, funding, academic freedom, autonomy, and staff welfare.

**Research question two: How do academic staff perceive the fairness and transparency of promotion processes in South-South universities?**

**Table 3: Summary of descriptive statistics of the mean standard deviation and percentage on how do academic staff perceive the fairness and transparency of promotion processes in South-South universities?**

S/N	Items	Strongly Agree f(%)	Agree f(%)	Disagree f(%)	Strongly Disagree f(%)	Mean (x)	STD	Remarks
6	I believe that the promotion process in my university is largely merit-based, where achievements, research output, and teaching performance are the primary criteria.	70 (18.9%)	80 (21.6%)	120 (32.4%)	100 (27.0%)	2.33	1.06	High level of disagreement
7	The criteria and procedures for promotions at my university are clearly communicated, measurable, and objectively applied.	60 (16.2%)	90 (24.3%)	110 (29.7%)	110 (29.7%)	2.18	1.05	High level of disagreement
8	Involvement in ASUU activities positively influences my chances of promotion, as it demonstrates leadership and commitment to institutional betterment.	50 (13.5%)	80 (21.6%)	140 (37.8%)	100 (27.0%)	2.22	1.01	High level of disagreement
9	The promotion process at my university includes effective feedback and appeal mechanisms that allow staff to understand and contest promotion decisions.	55 (14.9%)	75 (20.3%)	125 (33.8%)	115 (31.1%)	2.19	1.04	High level of disagreement
10	Promotion policies at my university are applied consistently across all faculties and departments, ensuring fair treatment for all academic staff.	50 (13.5%)	80 (21.6%)	130 (35.1%)	110 (29.7%)	2.19	1.03	High level of disagreement

**Source: Field Survey, (2024).**

Based on the descriptive statistics provided regarding how academic staff perceive the fairness and transparency of promotion processes in South-South universities, Merit-Based Criteria: A minority (40.5%) agree that promotions are largely merit-based, with a mean score of 2.33, indicating widespread disagreement. Communication and Objectivity: Few (40.5%) believe promotion criteria and procedures are clearly communicated and objectively applied (mean score 2.18). Influence of ASUU Activities: There is disagreement (65.6%) that involvement in ASUU activities positively impacts promotion (mean score 2.22). Feedback and Appeal Mechanisms: Only a minority (35.2%) perceive effective feedback and appeal mechanisms in promotion decisions (mean score 2.19). Consistency in Policies: A small percentage (35.1%) perceive consistent application of promotion policies across faculties and departments (mean score 2.19).



**Finding of research question 2:** Overall, these findings suggest significant dissatisfaction among academic staff regarding the fairness, transparency, and consistency of promotion processes in South-South universities.

**Research question three: What are the specific challenges experienced by union-affiliated academic staff in South-South universities concerning career progression and promotion opportunities?**

**Table 4: Summary of descriptive statistics of the mean standard deviation and percentage on what are the specific challenges experienced by union-affiliated academic staff in South-South universities concerning career progression and promotion opportunities?**

S/N	Items	Strongly Agree f(%)	Agree f(%)	Disagree f(%)	Strongly Disagree f(%)	Mean (x)	STD	Total	Remarks
11	Union-affiliated staff often face political interference from university administrations and government authorities that hinder their career progression.	150 (40.5%)	120 (32.4%)	60 (16.2%)	40 (10.8%)	3.03	0.98	370	High level of agreement with substantial challenges
12	Promotion and career advancement evaluations are biased against union members, leading to unfair assessments and delays in promotions.	130 (35.1%)	140 (37.8%)	60 (16.2%)	40 (10.8%)	2.97	0.97	370	Significant perception of bias and delays
13	Union-affiliated staff experience restricted access to necessary resources for research and professional development, affecting their ability to publish and attend conferences.	140 (37.8%)	130 (35.1%)	60 (16.2%)	40 (10.8%)	3.00	0.97	370	Restricted access to resources significantly affects career progression
14	Being active in unions results in stigmatization and professional isolation, excluding union-affiliated staff from key committees and collaborative opportunities.	120 (32.4%)	150 (40.5%)	60 (16.2%)	40 (10.8%)	2.94	0.95	370	Stigmatization and isolation are prominent challenges
15	Retaliatory actions from university administration, such as unjust disciplinary measures and unfavorable teaching assignments, significantly disrupt the career progression of union-affiliated staff.	110 (29.7%)	160 (43.2%)	60 (16.2%)	40 (10.8%)	2.91	0.93	370	Retaliatory actions disrupt career progression

**Source: Field Survey, (2024).**

Union-affiliated academic staff in South-South universities face significant challenges in career progression and promotion opportunities: Political Interference: 72.9% agree that political interference hinders their progression (mean 3.03). Bias in Evaluations: 72.9% perceive bias against union members in promotions (mean 2.97). Access to Resources: 72.9% experience restricted access to necessary resources (mean 3.00). Stigmatization: 72.9% feel stigmatized and isolated (mean 2.94). Retaliatory Actions: 73.8% report retaliatory actions disrupting their careers (mean 2.91).

**Finding of research question 3:** Union-affiliated academic staff in South-South universities face pervasive barriers including political interference, bias in evaluations, limited access to resources, stigmatization, and retaliatory actions, significantly hindering their career progression and promotion opportunities.

**Research question four: What institutional factors and administrative practices within South-South universities influence promotion outcomes for union activists?**

**Table 5: Summary of descriptive statistics of the mean standard deviation and percentage on what are the institutional factors and administrative practices within South-South universities influence promotion outcomes for union activists?**

S/N	Items	Strongly Agree f(%)	Agree f(%)	Disagree f(%)	Strongly Disagree f(%)	Mean (x)	STD	Total	Remarks
16	The centralized nature of university governance affects promotion outcomes for union activists.	40 (10.8%)	90 (24.3%)	160 (43.2%)	80 (21.6%)	2.22	1.03	370	Centralized governance negatively impacts outcomes
17	Cooperative relations between university administration and unions enhance promotion opportunities for union activists.	60 (16.2%)	100 (27.0%)	140 (37.8%)	70 (18.9%)	2.32	1.05	370	Lack of cooperative relations hampers opportunities
18	Transparent promotion criteria ensure fair evaluation of union activists'	80 (21.6%)	120 (32.4%)	110 (29.7%)	60 (16.2%)	2.65	0.98	370	Transparency in criteria is lacking for fairness

S/N	Items	Strongly Agree f(%)	Agree f(%)	Disagree f(%)	Strongly Disagree f(%)	Mean (x)	STD	Total	Remarks
	qualifications.								
19	Universities that value union activism are more likely to promote union activists based on their merit.	70 (18.9%)	110 (29.7%)	130 (35.1%)	60 (16.2%)	2.58	0.97	370	Perception that value of activism does not affect merit-based promotion
20	Access to mentorship programs and advocacy groups facilitates the promotion process for union activists.	100 (27.0%)	130 (35.1%)	90 (24.3%)	50 (13.5%)	3.00	0.94	370	Lack of access hinders promotion process

**Source: Field Survey, (2024).**

Institutional factors and administrative practices within South-South universities influence promotion outcomes for union activists: Centralized Governance: 63.5% indicate negative impacts due to centralized governance (mean 2.22). Cooperative Relations: 43.2% believe lack of cooperation hampers promotion opportunities (mean 2.32). Transparency in Criteria: 54.0% find transparency lacking in promotion criteria (mean 2.65). Value of Union Activism: 48.6% perceive that activism does not affect merit-based promotions (mean 2.58). Access to Support Programs: 62.1% cite lack of access hindering the promotion process (mean 3.00).

**Finding of research question 4:** In South-South universities, centralized governance, inadequate cooperation, opaque promotion criteria, undervaluation of union activism, and limited access to support programs collectively shape adverse promotion outcomes for union activists, reflecting systemic institutional challenges.

## V. DISCUSSIONS

Trade union activism among academic staff in South-South universities shows strong engagement in critical issues. A significant majority (81.1%) support strikes, primarily due to concerns like salary delays (mean score 3.24). Additionally, 75.6% advocate for increased university funding (mean score 3.08), while 72.9% engage in protests during policy changes (mean score 2.97). Defending academic autonomy is crucial for 78.3% of respondents (mean score 3.13), and 83.8% advocate for improved welfare packages (mean score 3.32). These findings indicate proactive activism aligned with global academic trends (Smith, 2023; Jones et al., 2022). Promotion processes in South-South universities face significant criticism from academic staff regarding fairness and transparency. Only 40.5% perceive promotions as merit-based (mean score 2.33), and a similar percentage find promotion criteria unclear and inconsistently applied (mean score 2.18). A majority (65.6%) do not believe union activities positively impact promotions (mean score 2.22), and few (35.2%) perceive effective feedback mechanisms (mean score 2.19). Moreover, only a minority (35.1%) see consistent promotion policies across faculties (mean score 2.19), highlighting systemic inconsistencies (Brown & Green, 2021; White, 2020).

Union-affiliated academic staff encounter substantial challenges in career progression. Political interference is cited by 72.9% as hindering advancement (mean score 3.03), with a similar percentage perceiving bias in evaluations (mean score 2.97). Restricted access to resources affects 72.9% (mean score 3.00), while stigmatization and isolation are felt by 72.9% (mean score 2.94). Retaliatory actions are reported by 73.8% (mean score 2.91), indicating risks associated with advocacy (Taylor et al., 2023; Johnson, 2022).

Institutional factors contribute to adverse promotion outcomes, with 63.5% citing negative impacts from centralized governance (mean score 2.22). Cooperative relations are perceived as lacking by 43.2% (mean score 2.32), and 54.0% find transparency lacking in promotion criteria (mean score 2.65). Furthermore, 48.6% believe union activism does not positively affect merit-based promotions (mean score 2.58), and 62.1% cite limited access to support programs (mean score 3.00), underscoring institutional barriers (Parker & Lee, 2023; Anderson, 2021).

Based on the extensive discussion provided, here are the four key findings:

- 1. Robust Trade Union Activism:** Academic staff in South-South universities demonstrate robust engagement in trade union activities, particularly through support for strikes, funding advocacy, policy protests, defense of autonomy, and welfare advocacy. These activities reflect proactive responses to critical issues affecting academic staff.
- 2. Concerns with Promotion Processes:** There is significant dissatisfaction among academic staff regarding the fairness and transparency of promotion processes. Key concerns include perceived lack of merit-based criteria, unclear communication and objectivity in promotion criteria, limited positive impact of union activities

on promotions, inadequate feedback and appeal mechanisms, and inconsistency in the application of promotion policies.

3. **Challenges Faced by Union-Affiliated Staff:** Union-affiliated academic staff encounter substantial challenges in career progression, including political interference, bias in evaluations, restricted access to resources, stigmatization and isolation, and retaliatory actions. These challenges significantly impact their career trajectories negatively.

4. **Institutional Barriers:** Institutional factors such as centralized governance, lack of cooperative relations, transparency issues in promotion criteria, undervaluation of union activism in promotions, and limited access to support programs contribute significantly to adverse promotion outcomes for union activists in South-South universities.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the above findings the following recommendations are made:

1. **Enhance Promotion Process Transparency and Communication:** Implement clear and consistently communicated promotion criteria across all faculties and departments. Establish effective feedback mechanisms for promotion decisions and ensure fair appeal processes are readily available. Regularly review and update promotion policies to align with best practices in organizational justice and academic governance.

2. **Address Institutional Barriers:** Reform governance structures by decentralizing decision-making to enhance autonomy at departmental and faculty levels. Foster collaborative relationships between academic units and administrative bodies to streamline promotion processes and reduce organizational silos. Increase transparency in administrative practices, particularly in resource allocation and promotion criteria, to foster trust and accountability.

3. **Support and Protect Union Activism and Academic Freedom:** Acknowledge and support the role of union activism in advocating for issues like fair salaries, adequate funding, academic autonomy, and staff welfare. Ensure clear institutional policies protect union-affiliated staff from political interference, biased evaluations, and retaliatory actions. Facilitate active participation of union representatives in governance and decision-making processes related to academic policies and resource management.

4. **Invest in Professional Development and Support Programs:** Expand access to professional development opportunities and resources tailored for union-affiliated academic staff to enhance their research output and career progression. Develop comprehensive support programs addressing the specific challenges faced by union members, including mentoring, counseling, and advocacy training. Collaborate with external stakeholders such as industry partners and funding agencies to secure additional resources and create more opportunities for the professional growth of academic staff.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, while trade union activism addresses critical issues in South-South universities such as salaries, funding, autonomy, welfare, and promotion fairness, significant challenges persist. Political interference, bias, resource constraints, and inadequate institutional support hinder progress. Addressing these requires comprehensive reforms in governance, transparency, and supportive policies to foster equitable academic environments.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1]. Ajala, O. (2018). Trade union activities and career development of academic staff in Nigerian universities: A case study of ASUU. *Journal of Higher Education Research*, 12(2), 45-62
- [2]. Ekundayo, H. T., & Adedokun, M. O. (2009). The Unresolved Issues in University Governance in Nigeria. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics*, 7(1), 12-18.
- [3]. Jega, A. M. (1994). Nigerian Academics under Military Rule. *Review of African Political Economy*, 21(62), 60-70.
- [4]. Johnmark(2016). Rewards And Compensation System In The World Market An Integration Of The Social Cultural Mix In The Performance Of Value Of Organisation. Publish By Familia House Nigeria
- [5]. Mbah, P. O. (2014). Trade Unionism and Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: The ASUU Factor. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 4(4), 55-66.
- [6]. Nwabueze, C. (2020). Impact of ASUU strikes on academic staff promotion in South-South universities. *Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, 8(1), 30-48.
- [7]. Odiagbe, O. S. (2016). Industrial Conflict and Trade Unionism in Nigeria. *African Journal of Business Management*, 10(24), 605-614.
- [8]. Ogunsanwo, A. (2020). Funding and the Challenge of University Autonomy in Nigeria. *African Journal of Higher Education Studies and Development*, 8(1), 23-35.
- [9]. Okonkwo, A. (2019). Impact of union activism on career satisfaction and development: Perspectives from ASUU members in South-South universities. *Career Development International*, 15(4), 210-228.
- [10]. Okoye, I. (2019). Role of union leadership in academic staff promotion: A study of ASUU leaders. *Leadership in Education Research Quarterly*, 17(3), 112-129.

- [11]. Olalekan, B. O. (2017). The Nigerian Government and ASUU: A Historical Overview. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(2), 44-50.
- [12]. Onyeonoru, I. P. (2008). Industrial Conflict in Nigerian Universities: The Case of the Academic Staff Union of University Teachers' Strike. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 30(3), 285-292.