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## THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE ACTIVITIES OF NON-ACADEMIC STAFF UNIONS OF NIGERIAN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES. UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA IN PERSPECTIVE.

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THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE ACTIVITIES OF NON- ACADEMIC  
STAFF UNIONS OF NIGERIAN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES. UNIVERSITY  
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## **Abstract**

This study focused on the role of information in the activities of non-academic staff unions (NASU/SSANU) in the University of Nigeria, Enugu campus. It analyzed the invaluable contribution of appropriate information dissemination to the achievement of the objectives of the labour Unions. The population of the study consisted of all the members of NASU/SSANU working at the Enugu Campus of the University. However, a random sample involving the use of ninety copies of the questionnaire was conducted. Out of the ninety (90) copies of the questionnaire distributed randomly to NASU/SSANU members, seventy (70) copies (77.7%) were properly filled and returned. It was found that 53(76%) copies of the questionnaire were completed by NASU members, while SSANU members filled 17[24%] copies. Majority of the respondents had either first degrees/masters with 43(61.4%). The study has shown that the respondents understood the meaning of information with mean scores 3.53, 3.14 and 2.87, respectively. The respondents appreciated the role of information in their activities such as meetings [3.47], decision-making [3.37], rallies (3.22), and getting response from the university administration (3.17). It was found that non-availability/ misinformation on the activities of NASU/SSANU to members could create problems such as poor attendance to their rallies [3.45], non-participation of members in meetings [3.38], late response to meetings (3.37), late commencement of strike action (3.21) and non-participation of some members of the unions in voting [2.87].

**Keywords:** Information, NASU/SSANU Activities, Universities, Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

In the Nigerian federal universities such as the University of Nigeria, there are junior and senior categories of staff. Among the senior staff are the academics and members of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU). There are also members of the Non- academic Staff Union (NASU) whose membership is made up of mainly the junior staff. According to Adeniji and Adekunjo (2010), NASU exists to ensure that its members are not maltreated by the management, and to provide a forum for participation in the leadership of their institution through negotiations with the management. They are also of the view that the Union serves as a means of interaction and education of its members through conferences, workshops and seminars. Labour organizations in Nigeria are established to meet the needs of the workers [Wigwe and Garuba, 2014]. Members of NASU constitute the largest of all the staff unions in the federal universities.

This paper is devoted to the activities of the Non- academic Staff Union, and members of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian universities (SSANU). These Unions exist in the University of Nigeria mainly to pursue and capture the needs and interests of their members. The executive members of these unions encourage their members to perform their duties creditably and expect their rewards from the University Administration.

Harmonious relationship between the unions and the University Administration exists when the staff perform their duties as expected and receive their salaries and allowances as scheduled. However, disharmony occurs the moment the University Administration owes members of these staff unions their salaries and allowances. The uncomfortable condition would compel executive members of the unions to disseminate information to their members for them to hold rallies, prayers or meetings in which they discuss issues affecting their rewards. Decisions reached in their meetings or rallies are sent as information to the University Administration before the commencement of a warning strike action.

One of such meetings was convened through the letter dated July 17, 2017 which was addressed to all members of SSANU and NASU. The agenda among other things were violation of agreement reached between the university Administration and the unions on salary shortfall.

The executive members of the unions in their letter dated July 21, 2017 and also addressed to the University Administration pointed out their following grievances:

- Payment of the balance of 15% June 2017 salaries and allowances within five (5) days.
- Payment of all arrears of check - off dues- January to June, 2017 within two (2) days.
- Payment of arrears of check-off dues from the staff primary school (March 2016 – June 2017).
- Full implementation of 2009 FGN/ Unions agreement: payment of N30, 000:00 and N15, 000:00 monthly hazard allowances to concerned staff.
- Payment of overtime and shift- duty allowances to deserving staff.
- Immediate payment of out- standing promotion arrears for 2013, 2014 etc to concerned staff.

The letter as usual was signed by their chairmen in the following order:

Comrade Paul O. Erua for SSANU.

Comrade Clifford I. Amoke for NASU (UNN).

Comrade Kalu A. Agwu for NASU (UNEC).

It was noted that through the above signed letter, the unions gave the university administration “a 21 days ultimatum from Friday July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017 to do the needful and avoid facing further necessary action”.

“Further necessary action” was no other thing than strike action. The unions had a national strike action which started on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and was suspended on March 19, 2018. It was one of the longest strike actions they had, and it affected many services and income of the university seriously. Some parents having waited for the end of the strike action, took their children and wards away from the staff schools to other schools. Workers embark on strike as a means of settling their dispute with their employers [Wigwe and Garuba, 2014].

According to <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/09/22>, the non-teaching unions were of the view that the strike action they had would have been avoided if the government had done the needful. The trade unions adopted dialogue and collective bargaining to address the welfare of their members when threatened. In a letter, addressed to the branch chairmen of NASU and SSANU, dated September 28, 2020, and signed by Samson C. Ugwoke and Peters A. Adeyemi, the unions executive members directed the branch chairmen and their members to embark on a

fourteen days (14) warning strike with effect from October 5<sup>th</sup> , 2020. According to the letter, the warning strike was based on the following grievances:

- Inconsistences of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIIS) in the payment of salaries to the members.
- Non- payment of arrears of Earned Allowances owed NASU and SSANU members.
- Non- payment of arrears of National Minimum Wage to the members
- Non- payment of retirement benefits to the outgone members
- Lack of seriousness and delays by government in the renegotiation of the 2009 FGN/ NASU & SSANU Agreements.
- Usurpation of Headship of Non- teaching units by Academic staff in clear violation of condition of service and establishment procedures.
- Neglect and poor funding of State Universities.
- Corruption in the University system and Non-constitution of Visitation Panels for the Universities in line with laws.

Information has been defined as knowledge communicated or received in relation to a given subject [Olowonefa and Musa, 2011]. Knowledge is the product of systematically released and received piece of information on a subject (Ugwoke, Asogwa and Ezukwuoke, 2019). Aina(2004) asserts that information means news or facts required for settlement of a state of uncertainty. Availability and use of information gives enlightenment to human minds. This must be why Afolabi (2003) defined it as an external response which modifies an individual's knowledge state. Information, therefore, is that which informs or gives one knowledge on a specific area of human endeavor. It may be delivered through spoken words or through written communication (Ugwuanyi, 2011). According to Ugwoke and Asogwa (2017), information is not only for decision- making, it is also for action- taking

based on the prevailing circumstances. The executive members of NASU/SSANU send information to their members whenever there is need for clarification of issues affecting them and the performance of their duties in the university.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Information makes the difference between developed and developing nations. It has the ability to influence individuals and organizations for positive as well as negative performances. If properly used, information can help individuals and organizations perform better and achieve desirable objectives. The problem is to what extent has information helped in the activities of the non- academic staff unions (NASU & SSANU) of the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus?

## **3. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are the following:

- (a) To identify the role of information in the performance of activities of NASU and SSANU of the university of Nigeria, Enugu Campus.
- (b) To find out the extent to which information has helped members of the unions in achieving their union's objectives.
- (c) To ascertain problems affecting the unions' activities as a result of false/misinformation or non- availability of useful information to the members.

#### **4. Research Method**

The survey descriptive research method has been used in this study. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire entitled. “The Role of Information in the Activities of NASU and SSANU at the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus”. Ninety(90) copies of the questionnaire were produced and distributed randomly to members of NASU / SSANU

However, from members of NASU fifty three (53)copies of the questionnaire were properly completed and returned, while seventeen (17) copies of the same questionnaire were properly completed and returned by members of SSANU.

Data collected were analyzed by using frequencies, tables, percentages and mean scores. The questionnaire was structured in the following order of Strongly Agree [SA], Agree [A], Disagree [D] and Strongly Disagree [SD] with corresponding nominal value of 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. The criterion mean value was 2.5 which meant that analysed data with 2.5 and above as mean values represent acceptance, while mean values below it represent rejection.

#### **5. Literature Review**

According to Onu (2005), information is the oil that greases the activities of organizations and the government. No organization’s programmes can

succeed without mobilization of its members through information dissemination. The main objective of establishing libraries and other information organizations in the modern societies is to meet information needs of different user communities [Ochogwu, 2010]. Libraries and other institutions such radio and television stations are established to acquire, organize and disseminate appropriate information to the needy. Information is available to enable us take better decisions that can bring improvement in what we do. [Ackland, 2010]. No undertaking can be effectively done without use of the appropriate information. The available information must be relevant for decision making to ensure advancement. The relevance of information in decision making of all human activities cannot be overstressed. [Molumfashi, 2001]. Different programmes of human activities require specific and different information. According to Ugwoke and Asogwa (2017), appropriate decision and actions can only be taken when the required information has been made available at the appropriate time and in the language understood by the recipients.

Ogbonna (2019) refers to information as an ingredient which helps people develop themselves and the society. The author also point out that access to appropriate information is a necessity for societal socio-economic and political development.

Members of the unions would like to known, for instance, why their salaries or allowances are not paid when expected. They may also like to know why their salaries are sometimes not paid promptly though released by the federal government.

Such knowledge would help them communicate with the University Administration appropriately. Responses given by the University Administration are shared as information to the members. Information dissemination is important as it facilitates active participation of people in the management of their affairs [Mole and Dim, 2012]. Writing on the duties of librarians, Bankole (2017) points out that they should engage themselves in finding out the information needs of users. They should also proffer solutions. He is equally of the view that librarians should consider the need to provide information in the language understood by the users. There are diverse information needs as there are different users. The information professionals primarily concern themselves with acquiring, processing, preserving, storing and disseminating information to satisfy needs of the users. However information needs cannot be satisfied if the language used is not understood by the users.

There is no area of human activities where information is not required for effective and efficient performance.[ Ode, 2017]. The information needs naturally make the user search for satisfaction which occurs when the said information is found and used. Information is needed for people to get along in today's world and as the world's population increases, it becomes necessary and important that the faster and better means of providing it, should be followed. [Agboola, 2010]. Ugwuanyi (2011) has pointed out that information is essential to the success and development to all human beings, especially the youth. Olayinka(2011) is of the view that while

relevant and timely information is necessary for use in decision making, irrelevant information makes decision- making difficult. Bitagi and Saka(2011) affirm that efficient management is essential for prompt provision and utilization of relevant information in solving problems in a democratic society. Provision of correct information is necessary to help users make informed decisions (Bankole, 2017). The importance of providing accurate, timely and relevant information cannot be overemphasized. This is more so as non- availability of relevant information can even affect the use of any given library, especially at the higher institutions [Ugah, 2010].

### **Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

**Table 1:** Demographic Information of Respondents.

a) Category of Labour Union

NASU	Percentage%	SSANU	Percentage%
53	76	17	24

Data in **Table 1 (a)** Show that 53 (76%) of the respondents were members of NASU, while 17 (24%) others were members of SSANU

b) Gender

Male	Percentage%	Female	Percentage%
17	24	53	76

Data in **Table 1 (b)** show that 17 (24%) of the respondents were males, while 53 (76%) others were females.

c) Highest Qualification

Below HND And First Degree		HND		First Degree		Masters		Ph.D	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
15	21.4	12	17.1	21	30	22	31.4	-	-

Data in **Table 1 (c)** show that 15 (21.4%) did not have up-to HND and first degree. 12 (17.1%) of the respondents had HND, while 21 (30%) others had first degree. 22 (31.4%) of the respondents had their masters degrees.

d) Years of experience

	Years	Number	Percentage
1	1 – 5	28	40.0
2	6 – 10	3	4.2
3	11 – 15	22	31.4
4	16 – 20	1	1.4
5	21 and above	12	17.1
	Not indicated	4	5.7
		70	99.8

Data in **Table 1 (d)** show that 28 (40%) of the respondents had between 1 – 5 years of experience, while 22 (31.4%) others had between 11 -15 years of experience. 12 (17.1%) others had 21 and above years of experience.

**Table 2:** Mean Scores of What the Respondents Considered as the Meaning of Information. (N= 70)

	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
A	It is knowledge communicated or received in relation to a given subject.	42	25	1	2	3.53	Accepted
B	It is an external response which modifies or clarifies an individual's knowledge state.	15	38	10	7	2.87	Accepted
C	It is processed data capable of being used to solve problems.	23	38	5	4	3.14	Accepted

In the Table 2, the mean scores are 3.53, 3.14 and 2.87. All the items were rated positive.

**Table 3:** Mean scores of the Respondents on the Role of Information in NASU/SSANU Activities.

	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
A	It is the means executive members of NASU/SSANU use to call for general meetings	35	33	2	-	3.47	Accepted
B	It is a means of inviting NASU/SSANU members to rallies.	20	47	2	1	3.22	Accepted
C	It is used by NASU/SSANU members to take decisions and declare strike action.	30	37	2	1	3.37	Accepted
D	It is a means of making the university Administration know the grievances of NASU/SSANU members.	25	35	7	3	3.17	Accepted

The mean scores in Table 3 above are 3.47, 3.37, 3.22 and 3.17. It shows that all the items were rated positive.

**Table 4:** The Extent Information Helps NASU/SSANU Members Achieve Their Objectives.

Data in Table 4 above show the following mean scores: 3.47, 3.37, 3.22, and 3.17. All the items were rated positive.

	Item	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	Mean	Remark
A	It makes university Administration respond to the need of NASU/SSANU Members.	47	20	2	1	3.22	Accepted
B	It helps University Administration know the grievances of NASU/SSANU members	25	35	7	3	3.17	Accepted
C	It helps in attracting large number of new NASU/SSANU members to their meetings or rallies.	32	35	2	1	3.47	Accepted
D	It makes NASU/SSANU members know the response of the university Administration to their grievances.	30	37	2	1	3.37	Accepted

**Table 5:** Problems of Non-availability/misinformation on the Activities of NASU/SSANU Members.

	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
A	Non-Participation of affected members in their meetings	40	20	7	3	3.38	Accepted
B	Late response of members to meetings	30	37	2	1	3.37	Accepted
C	Non-Participation of some members of NASU/SSANU in voting new executive members into power	38	15	7	10	2.87	Accepted

D	Late commencement of strike action	25	38	4	3	3.21	Accepted
E	Poor attendance to NASU/SSANU rallies.	45	15	7	3	3.45	Accepted

Data in Table 4 above show the following mean scores: 3.45, 3.38, 3.37, 3.21 and 2.87. It shows that all the items were rated positive.

### **Discussion of Findings.**

It has been found in this study that members of NASU/SSANU of the University of Nigeria, Enugu campus know the meaning of information. Majority of them had obtained their first degrees and above from various universities they attended. They appreciate the role of information in projecting their activities to achieve their objectives.

It has been also noted in the study that members of NASU were greater in number than members of SSANU. It could be as a result of the fact that many of the staff prefer to remain as members of NASU even after they have become senior staff. It does not happen without the envisaged benefits, especially that of interaction and sharing of information on payment of salaries and allowances.

Information has helped NASU/SSANU members to a large extent, especially in the areas of meetings or rallies to know the response of the university Administration to their grievances and demands. Reactions of members of NASU/SSANU depend on the enlightenment they receive from these meetings or rallies.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The importance of information in the development of individuals and organizations cannot be overemphasized. In every human activity, information is needed and it should be provided at the right time and quality. (Awoyemi and Yusuf, 2013). The progress of every organization depends largely on the management of its information. Nothing can happen in human society without sharing of appropriate information. Efforts should be made to ensure that correct information is made available to the union members and at the right time.

Having noted the factors associated with non-availability or misinformation which include poor attendance to rallies and non-participation of members in their meetings, NASU/SSANU members will do better when they are avoided.

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