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Constructive Collective Bargaining as Panacea to ASUU VS FGN Face-Off: 2009-2025 Debate

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Abstract

This study examined constructive collective bargaining as a panacea to ASUU–FGN face-off (2009–2025 Debates). Using a quantitative design, data were gathered from a sample of 384 academic staff drawn from institutions across Nigeria’s six geopolitical zones using a multidimensional sampling technique. Reliable instrument with Cronbach’s $\alpha > .70$ was administered and analyzed with SPSS v27 Multiple regression results indicate the model explains a substantial proportion of variance in the ASUU–FGN face-off ($R^2 = .536$; $F(3, 368) = 51.894$, $p = .000 < .05$ sig level). The study found that all the three predictors included in the study had statistically significant negative influence on the face-off between ASUU and Federal Government of Nigeria with transparency and trust-building ($\beta = -.347$, $p < .05$), dialogue and conflict management mechanisms ($\beta = -.321$, $p < .05$), and timely implementation of agreements ($\beta = -.298$, $p = .05$). The study concludes that constructive collective bargaining remains a potent panacea for fostering sustainable industrial harmony between ASUU and the FGN, with transparency and trust-building emerging as the most decisive factor. Thus, the study recommends that (i) the Federal Government and ASUU institutionalize transparent negotiation practices and proactive fiscal disclosure; (ii) the government establish dedicated budgetary provisions, monitoring frameworks, and clear timelines to guarantee timely implementation of agreements; and (iii) both parties adopt formalized, problem-solving dialogue structures (grievance channels, mediation, and negotiator training) to prevent and manage disputes. These measures together position constructive collective bargaining as a practical panacea for sustainable industrial harmony in Nigerian higher education.

Keywords: Constructive Collective Bargaining; ASUU–FGN Face-Off; Transparency; Dialogue; Timely Implementation; Industrial Harmony



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1.1 Introduction

The stability of industrial relations continues to serve as a critical determinant of growth, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability within higher education systems globally. Universities, as citadels of knowledge and innovation, are mandated to operate in environments that guarantee uninterrupted teaching, research, and community service. In many contexts, collective bargaining has evolved as the dominant mechanism for regulating employer–employee relations, particularly in knowledge-intensive institutions such as universities. In advanced economies including the United States, the United Kingdom, and parts of Europe constructive collective bargaining has been institutionalized as a collaborative framework where academic unions and governments negotiate employment conditions in good faith. Beyond the signing of agreements, such systems embed provisions for monitoring, review, and enforcement through credible institutional mechanisms. This has contributed to relative stability in academic calendars, reduced industrial unrest, and enhanced trust in higher education governance (Jones, 2022; Smith, 2024).

Across Africa, the relevance of collective bargaining to educational development is equally pronounced. Evidence from South Africa and Kenya demonstrates that structured negotiations, when anchored on transparency, realistic expectations, and time-bound agreements, can produce more sustainable outcomes. In South Africa, despite persistent fiscal constraints, the higher education sector has maintained relative stability through bargaining frameworks that incorporate student representatives, academic unions, and government officials in inclusive dialogue (Mabogunje, 2023). Such experiences offer instructive lessons for Nigeria, where labour disputes within universities have become endemic and continue to undermine institutional credibility.

Nigeria epitomizes a paradox in higher education industrial relations. While national development plans and successive policy documents acknowledge education as a cornerstone of socio-economic transformation, the system has been persistently destabilized by recurrent strikes. These disruptions are largely attributable to the inability of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to resolve disputes within a constructive bargaining framework. The 2009 ASUU–FGN Agreement originally conceived to strengthen university autonomy, improve funding, address infrastructural deficits, settle earned allowances, and enhance staff welfare has ironically become the most contested source of conflict. Between 2009 and 2025, most of its provisions have remained either unimplemented or only partially executed, fueling repeated cycles of industrial action that



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disrupted academic calendars and eroded the global image of Nigerian universities (Okebukola, 2021; Ogunyemi, 2022).

These persistent conflicts between ASUU and the FGN highlight the structural absence of constructive collective bargaining in Nigeria's university system. Negotiations are typically adversarial, politicized, and undermined by unfulfilled promises. Whereas government negotiators routinely invoke resource constraints, ASUU insists on adherence to agreements and prioritization of education. The resulting mistrust, coupled with weak monitoring mechanisms and delayed implementation, has entrenched a culture of suspicion and recurrent dialogue breakdowns (Fajana, 2023). Unlike constructive bargaining which thrives on inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and timeliness Nigeria's model reflects destructive patterns that secure fragile truces without delivering sustainable solutions.

The consequences of this dysfunctional bargaining culture are deep and multidimensional. Students, as the most affected stakeholders, face truncated learning sessions, elongated academic calendars, delayed graduation, and diminished learning outcomes. Parents and guardians are compelled to shoulder significant financial and psychological burdens as study durations extend indefinitely. For academic staff, repeated strikes translate into declining morale, reduced professional satisfaction, and frustration over unfulfilled welfare commitments. Institutions themselves suffer reputational decline, loss of international collaboration opportunities, weakened research productivity, and a downward spiral in global rankings. At the national scale, the crisis exacerbates brain drain, undermines human capital development, and weakens Nigeria's capacity to compete in the global knowledge economy (Egbule, 2024).

Despite a range of interventionist measures including parliamentary mediations, judicial rulings, and presidential directives the ASUU–FGN conflict has proven remarkably persistent. Agreements are seldom fully implemented, and unresolved commitments frequently reignite new rounds of disputes. This vicious cycle of negotiation, strike, partial implementation, and renewed conflict between 2009 and 2025 underscores the systemic absence of a constructive bargaining culture in Nigerian higher education.

It is against this backdrop that the case for constructive collective bargaining becomes both urgent and compelling. Unlike conventional models, constructive bargaining foregrounds inclusiveness, transparency, timeliness, realistic commitments, institutional monitoring, and



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Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

mutual accountability. When institutionalized, it holds the potential to restore trust, minimize industrial unrest, and enhance the credibility of agreements, thereby securing uninterrupted academic calendars and strengthening institutional resilience. This study, therefore, situates the 2009–2025 ASUU–FGN conflict within a broader debate on industrial relations in higher education, interrogating whether constructive collective bargaining can offer a sustainable pathway to industrial harmony, institutional renewal, and the repositioning of Nigerian universities as true engines of national development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In a properly functioning industrial relations system, collective bargaining should serve as a constructive platform where the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) engage in transparent, respectful, and inclusive dialogue to address issues affecting university education. Ideally, such bargaining would guarantee that agreements are realistic, faithfully implemented, and monitored through credible institutional mechanisms. This would ensure that universities remain stable, academic calendars are uninterrupted, and staff welfare is adequately provided for.

The benefits of such an arrangement are immense. Students would be assured of timely graduations, improved learning outcomes, and global competitiveness. Academic staff would experience higher morale, greater job satisfaction, and improved commitment to their professional responsibilities. Universities as institutions would enjoy credibility, attract international collaborations, and strengthen research outputs. More broadly, Nigeria's economy would benefit from a steady supply of skilled graduates, a stronger knowledge base, and reduced brain drain (Okebukola, 2021; Egbule, 2024).

However, the reality between 2009 and 2025 reveals a stark contrast. The 2009 ASUU–FGN Agreement, meant to transform Nigeria's university system, has instead become the epicenter of recurrent disputes due to non-implementation or partial fulfillment. Negotiations between both parties have frequently broken down, characterized by mistrust, politicization, and adversarial posturing. Rather than promoting industrial harmony, bargaining processes have often deepened suspicion and triggered repeated cycles of strikes and protests (Ogunyemi, 2022).

The consequences of this dysfunctional process are evident across multiple levels. Students bear the brunt through academic disruptions, overstretched semesters, and delayed graduation,



Taraba State University, Jalingo
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Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

which compromise their career opportunities. Parents endure financial strain and emotional frustration, while lecturers experience demoralization and declining job satisfaction. The universities themselves have suffered declining global rankings, reduced research capacity, and weakened international partnerships. At the national level, the persistent disruption in higher education undermines human capital development, accelerates the migration of skilled academics abroad, and diminishes Nigeria's ability to compete in the global knowledge economy (Fajana, 2023).

Over the years, various interventions have been attempted, including mediation by the National Assembly, directives from the presidency, arbitration by industrial courts, and intervention by regulatory agencies such as the National Universities Commission (NUC). However, these efforts have largely produced temporary truces rather than lasting solutions, as signed agreements are often neglected or poorly implemented, further eroding trust between ASUU and the government.

It is within this context that the present study becomes necessary. The research seeks to examine whether constructive collective bargaining, with its emphasis on trust, inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability, can provide a sustainable pathway to resolving the perennial ASUU–FGN disputes. By critically analyzing the period between 2009 and 2025, the study aims to propose a framework that can restore industrial harmony, stabilize academic calendars, and reposition Nigerian universities for global competitiveness and national development.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were developed based on the statement of the problem:

- i. To what extent do dialogue and conflict management mechanisms influence ASUU-FGN face-off in Nigeria?
- ii. What is the influence of timely implementation of agreements on ASUU-FGN face-off in Nigeria?
- iii. How does transparency and trust-building influence ASUU-FGN face-off in Nigeria?



Taraba State University, Jalingo
Faculty of Management Sciences

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1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine how constructive collective bargaining influences ASUU-FGN face-off in Nigeria, the specific objectives are to:

- i. Assess the extent to which dialogue and conflict management mechanisms influence ASUU-FGN face-off in Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the influence of timely implementation of agreements on ASUU-FGN face-off in Nigeria.
- iii. Evaluate how transparency and trust-building influence ASUU ASUU-FGN face-off in Nigeria.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Dialogue and conflict management mechanisms do not have statistically significant influence on ASUU-FGN face-off in Nigeria.

H₀₂: Timely implementation of agreements have no statistically significant influence on ASUU-FGN face-off in Nigeria.

H₀₃: Transparency and trust-building have no statistically significant influence on ASUU-FGN face-off in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Collective Bargaining

Collective bargaining refers to the process through which employers and employees, usually represented by unions, negotiate conditions of employment such as wages, workload, working hours, and welfare (Fajana, 2023). In Nigeria, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) represents academic staff, while the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) acts as the employer. The principle of collective bargaining is anchored on dialogue, compromise, and mutual agreement, and it functions as a democratic mechanism for industrial peace. However, when collective bargaining is weak, manipulative, or unconstructive, disputes escalate into strikes and prolonged industrial crises (Egbule, 2024). Constructive collective bargaining goes beyond mere negotiations during crisis. It emphasizes inclusiveness, transparency, timely implementation of agreements, trust-building, continuous dialogue, and evaluation mechanisms (Ogunyemi, 2022). Unlike traditional bargaining that often ends in deadlock, constructive collective bargaining seeks win-win solutions, integrating mediation, arbitration, and collaborative monitoring.



Taraba State University, Jalingo
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Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

Dimensions of Collective Bargaining

Inclusiveness in Negotiation

Inclusiveness ensures that all relevant stakeholders, government representatives, ASUU, student bodies, and other allied unions are adequately represented in the bargaining process. Lack of inclusiveness often leads to agreements that lack legitimacy and acceptance, fueling further conflict. Constructive collective bargaining emphasizes broad participation to capture diverse perspectives and strengthen ownership of agreements. As noted by Egbule (2024), inclusiveness enhances the legitimacy of agreements and reduces the likelihood of prolonged industrial disputes.

Transparency and Trust-Building

Transparency refers to openness in the negotiation process, where both parties disclose accurate information on financial resources, implementation capacity, and policy constraints. Trust-building is fostered when transparency becomes a consistent practice, reducing suspicion and hostility between negotiating actors. According to Fajana (2023), the absence of transparency and accountability in collective bargaining weakens trust, thereby escalating disputes and increasing the probability of strikes. Transparency thus acts as the foundation upon which constructive engagement can thrive.

Timely Implementation of Agreements

One of the recurring causes of the ASUU–FGN face-off has been the government’s failure to honor agreements on time. Constructive collective bargaining emphasizes timely implementation as a preventive mechanism against disputes. Agreements lose their relevance if delayed or partially implemented, leading to recurring strikes. Egbule (2024) stresses that honoring agreements promptly is one of the strongest predictors of industrial harmony, particularly in Nigeria’s higher education sector.

Dialogue and Conflict Management Mechanisms

Constructive collective bargaining involves not just negotiation during crises but also the institutionalization of continuous dialogue and conflict management platforms. These include mediation, arbitration, and joint consultative forums that operate beyond strike periods. According to Ogunyemi (2022), sustainable peace in industrial relations is achievable when dialogue is structured and continuous, rather than reactive and crisis-driven. Conflict management strategies provide avenues for early detection of grievances and their resolution before escalation.



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Monitoring and Evaluation of Agreements

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms ensure accountability in the implementation of agreements reached during negotiations. By setting up joint committees comprising representatives of both ASUU and FGN, progress can be tracked, lapses identified, and corrective measures taken in real time. The National Universities Commission (NUC, 2022) observed that the absence of monitoring structures in Nigeria's university system has contributed significantly to the recurrence of industrial disputes, as promises are made without accountability. Effective M&E thus strengthens compliance and sustains trust between parties.

The ASUU–FGN Face-off (2009–2025)

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) have been entangled in a cycle of disputes since the landmark 2009 Agreement, which remains a critical reference point in Nigeria's higher education industrial relations. The agreement was designed to address systemic challenges facing public universities, including underfunding, poor infrastructure, inadequate staff remuneration, earned academic allowances, university autonomy, and conditions of service (Okebukola, 2021). However, instead of resolving these structural issues, the agreement became a recurring source of conflict, as successive governments failed to honor its provisions fully or within agreed timelines.

Between 2009 and 2025, Nigerian universities witnessed no fewer than sixteen nationwide ASUU strikes, cumulatively lasting over forty months (NUC, 2022; Salami, 2024). This prolonged academic downtime translated into extended semesters, disrupted academic calendars, delayed graduations, and significant psychological stress for students and parents. Beyond academic delays, these strikes diminished the international competitiveness of Nigerian universities, as global ranking agencies increasingly factor institutional stability and research output into their evaluation criteria (World Bank, 2021; Times Higher Education, 2023). Consequently, Nigeria's universities slipped in global rankings, with many scholars seeking opportunities abroad, thereby exacerbating the brain drain crisis.

A central issue in the ASUU–FGN impasse is funding and revitalization of university infrastructure. The 2009 Agreement stipulated substantial annual allocations for upgrading facilities, but government disbursements often fell short of commitments. For example, while the Needs Assessment Report of 2012 revealed that Nigerian universities required over ₦1.3 trillion for revitalization, less than 20% of this amount had been released by 2020 (Odia &



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Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

Omofonmwan, 2023). This failure reinforced ASUU's skepticism toward government sincerity, fueling recurrent industrial actions.

Another contentious issue has been the earned academic allowances (EAA). Negotiated as part of the 2009 agreement, the allowances were meant to compensate lecturers for extra workload such as large-class supervision, postgraduate mentoring, and administrative responsibilities. However, arrears accumulated due to delayed or partial payments, often triggering fresh rounds of strikes. The government's insistence on verifying claims before disbursement further strained relations, as ASUU perceived such processes as deliberate attempts to stall implementation (Onyeonoru, 2020).

Distrust and credibility deficits are perhaps the most corrosive elements in the ASUU–FGN relationship. Each round of negotiations tends to end with signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) or Memoranda of Action (MoAs), but implementation falters. ASUU accuses government of insincerity and policy inconsistency, while government often frames ASUU's tactics as rigid, disruptive, and economically insensitive (Obi & Oguejiofor, 2022). This mutual suspicion has entrenched a zero-sum culture, where each party perceives concessions as losses rather than shared gains.

The introduction of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) in 2019 further intensified the conflict. ASUU rejected the platform, arguing that it undermined university autonomy and failed to capture the peculiarities of academic work, especially adjunct and contract engagements. The union proposed an alternative University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) which sparked years of stalemate, with government insisting on IPPIS compliance as a condition for salary payments (Fagbemi, 2022). This episode not only deepened mistrust but also revealed the absence of constructive dialogue and problem-solving mechanisms in Nigeria's industrial relations architecture.

The consequences of these recurrent face-offs are far-reaching. Students have been the greatest casualties, with disrupted learning experiences, reduced employability due to extended study periods, and migration abroad in search of stability. Parents and guardians bear additional financial burdens, while the economy suffers productivity losses as graduates enter the labor market late (Adeleke, 2022). Furthermore, prolonged strikes disrupt research projects, delay publications, and weaken Nigeria's contribution to global knowledge production.



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The ASUU–FGN conflict therefore illustrates the systemic failure of Nigeria’s collective bargaining model. Agreements are reached without inclusiveness, as critical stakeholders such as students, alumni associations, and employers of labor are excluded from negotiations. Transparency is weak, with government often reluctant to disclose fiscal realities or budgetary priorities. Trust is fragile, repeatedly eroded by unmet promises. Implementation is chronically delayed or partial, fueling cycles of discontent. Constructive dialogue and mediation are underutilized, with strikes and court injunctions often becoming the default tools of conflict management (Anifowose & Olayemi, 2022).

By 2025, the cumulative effect of these disputes underscores an urgent need for a paradigm shift. Constructive collective bargaining anchored on inclusiveness, transparency and trust-building, timely implementation, and constructive dialogue emerges as the only sustainable path to breaking the ASUU–FGN deadlock. Without this shift, Nigeria risks perpetuating an educational crisis that undermines its aspirations for human capital development, global competitiveness, and socio-economic transformation.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Integrative Negotiation Theory (Walton & McKersie, 1965), which posits that parties in a dispute can achieve mutually beneficial outcomes through collaboration, openness, and problem-solving. Unlike distributive bargaining, which is adversarial and focuses on dividing limited resources, integrative negotiation emphasizes transparency, trust-building, effective dialogue, and timely fulfillment of agreements as essential mechanisms for sustaining harmonious labor relations (Lewicki, Saunders, & Barry, 2015). The recurrent face-offs between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) exemplify how distributive bargaining approaches often escalate into strikes, whereas integrative mechanisms could provide a sustainable panacea.

Moreover, within this theoretical lens, dialogue and conflict management mechanisms reflect the collaborative communication processes that allow parties to explore interests rather than entrenched positions. Constructive dialogue reduces hostility, fosters understanding, and provides opportunities for joint problem-solving, which is consistent with the integrative approach to bargaining (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011). Similarly, transparency and trust-building embody the principle of openness in information sharing and sincerity in commitments. Integrative theory underscores that trust is the bedrock of effective negotiations,



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Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

as it reduces suspicion and enhances the willingness of parties to compromise (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2014). Finally, timely implementation of agreements aligns with integrative principles by ensuring that negotiated outcomes are honored without undue delay, thereby reinforcing credibility and preventing the cycle of recurrent disputes (Katz, Kochan, & Colvin, 2017).

Thus, the Integrative Negotiation Theory provides a robust framework for explaining the findings of this study. The regression results, which identified transparency and trust-building as the strongest predictor of reduced ASUU–FGN face-offs, are consistent with the theory's emphasis on building confidence and sustaining long-term relationships. Moreover, dialogue and timely implementation of agreements further strengthen cooperative outcomes, making constructive collective bargaining a reliable mechanism for promoting industrial harmony in Nigerian higher education.

2.3 Empirical Review

Empirical studies across Nigeria and comparable developing contexts have consistently shown that the quality of collective bargaining processes significantly determines the level of industrial harmony in higher education. Adejumo and Adewuyi (2022) examined bargaining processes in selected Nigerian federal universities and established that when key stakeholders particularly rank-and-file academic staff are excluded from negotiations, agreements tend to lack legitimacy and enforcement capacity. Their regression analysis revealed that inclusiveness was positively correlated with staff satisfaction and industrial harmony ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, Ibrahim and Salihu (2023), in a survey of three northern Nigerian universities, demonstrated that inclusive bargaining processes reduce alienation among staff unions and encourage shared responsibility in implementing agreements. Their findings showed that inclusiveness lowered strike propensity by 23%. A complementary study by Oloruntoba (2024) confirmed that inclusiveness in collective bargaining enhances perceived fairness, which in turn reduces adversarial relations and promotes sustained cooperation.

With respect to transparency and trust-building, several studies underscore its causal role in dispute prevention. Okebukola (2021) documented that opacity in Federal Government negotiations with ASUU particularly concerning IPPIS vs UTAS was strongly linked with distrust and repeated strikes. In a multi-campus survey, Eze and Adebayo (2022) reported that 71% of academic staff believed the government deliberately withholds relevant fiscal information, which entrenches mistrust. More recently, Otobo (2022) emphasized that



Taraba State University, Jalingo
Faculty of Management Sciences

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Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

disclosure of budgetary allocations and open communication during negotiations significantly enhances trust, which in turn reduces conflict intensity. Empirical validation by Yusuf and Bello (2023) further showed that transparency accounted for 42% of the variance in staff perceptions of legitimacy in negotiations.

The timely implementation of agreements has equally received empirical attention. Taiwo, Akinbode, Akinrinlola, and Olu-Ogunleye (2024), in their quantitative study of six federal universities in Southwest Nigeria, found that delayed or partial implementation of collective agreements negatively impacted welfare outcomes ($\beta = -0.494$, $p < 0.05$). Their findings confirm that non-implementation erodes credibility and fuels strikes. In another study of 720 staff across public tertiary institutions, Adegbile (2024) found that faithful and timely execution of agreements had a significant positive correlation with industrial harmony, reducing disruption by 36%. Likewise, World Bank (2023) data on Nigerian higher education concluded that recurrent strikes between 2009 and 2022 were primarily triggered by delays in implementing agreements, particularly around earned allowances and infrastructure revitalization funds.

On the dimension of constructive dialogue and conflict management, empirical evidence indicates that adversarial negotiation frameworks perpetuate industrial crises. Nwokike, Ndu-Anunobi, and Nwosu (2025) established that weak dialogue mechanisms and delays in addressing grievances strongly correlated with lower academic staff performance and increased strike incidence. Their regression analysis showed conflict mismanagement accounted for 49% of strike variability across sampled universities. Similarly, Osuagwu and Chukwuemeka (2024), in their mixed-method study of ASUU–FGN conflicts, found that absence of genuine dialogue and reliance on threat-based bargaining were central to the recurrence of strikes. Findings from ILO (2023) further reinforce that constructive dialogue mechanisms such as mediation and problem-solving bargaining models generate more sustainable resolutions compared to confrontational strategies.

In sum, the empirical literature provides strong support for the causal relationship between inclusiveness, transparency and trust-building, timely implementation of agreements, and constructive dialogue with industrial harmony in higher education. These studies converge to show that weaknesses in these dimensions explain the cyclical ASUU–FGN disputes between 2009 and 2025, validating the relevance of the proposed framework for this research.



Taraba State University, Jalingo
Faculty of Management Sciences

ISSN NO. 1118-3527 for "Journal Of Management Science Research and Contemporary
Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

3. Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between constructive collective bargaining and the resolution of disputes between ASUU and the Federal Government of Nigeria from 2009 to 2025. A descriptive approach was integrated within the quantitative framework to capture and analyze data on transparency and trust-building, timeliness of agreement implementation, and constructive dialogue as proxy variables. The target population comprised academic staff of federal and state universities, and government officials directly involved in negotiation processes. The population figure could not be precisely ascertained. This is a common challenge in social science research when studying large, dynamic organizations where the total number of personnel fluctuates due to continuous staff movements, including new hires, resignations, and retirements (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Smith, 2022). Consequently, the population size was treated as unknown for the purpose of sampling. To ensure the statistical validity of the study and to obtain a representative sample, the sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for unknown populations. This robust statistical method is widely accepted for situations where the exact population size is not available or is considered infinite (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2018).

Therefore, the formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z^2(P)(1-P)}{e^2}$$

Where:

- Z: Confidence Level {95% which corresponds to a Z-score (Z) of 1.96 which is also the standard for most academic research}
- e^2 : Margin of Error {A margin of error (e) of 5% (0.05) was deemed acceptable, providing a reasonable level of precision for the study's findings}
- P: Estimated Proportion {the proportion of the population that has the characteristic being studying, a conservative value of 0.5 ($p = 0.5$) was assumed. This value yields the maximum possible sample size, thereby ensuring the most representative sample.



Hence, substituting these parameters into the formula, we have:

Therefore, the formula is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
n &= \frac{1.96^2(0.5)(1-0.5)}{0.05^2} \\
&= \frac{3.8416(0.5)(0.5)}{0.0025} \\
&= \frac{3.8416(0.25)}{0.0025} \\
&= \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} \\
&= 384.16
\end{aligned}$$

Based on Cochran’s (1977) formula for unknown populations, the sample size for the study was determined as 384. Accordingly, 384 ASUU members were drawn from institutions across Nigeria’s six geopolitical zones. A multidimensional sampling approach was adopted: purposive sampling was used to select institutions due to the absence of a comprehensive ASUU sampling frame (Etikan et al., 2016), while stratified random sampling ensured balanced representation across academic cadres (professors, senior lecturers, and junior lecturers).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from prior studies, with Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients exceeding 0.70, consistent with the reliability threshold recommended by Hair et al. (2021). Descriptive statistics were first generated, followed by multiple regression analysis using SPSS v27 to test the hypotheses and assess the influence of constructive collective bargaining dimensions on the ASUU–FGN face-off. Ethical standards were upheld, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Response Rate

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Returned/Validity Rate

Copies of Questionnaire	Frequency	Percent
Distributed	384	100.0
Returned	372	96.9
Not Returned	12	3.1

Source: Author’s Computation (2026).



Table 1 presents the outcome of the questionnaire distribution and the return rate. Based on the table, 384 copies of questionnaire were distributed constituting 100%. Of these, 372 copies were returned, which is a 96.9% return rate with 12 copies representing 3.1% not returned. The 372 (96.9%) were found suitable to proceed with the statistical analysis. Such a rate enhances the credibility and generalizability of findings, as emphasized by Holtom et al. (2022), who regard rates above 80% as excellent. Moreover, Taherdoost and Madanchian (2023) also noted that most surveys average around 50%, making this result exceptional. The high response rate suggests effective survey design and strong rapport with respondents. It ensures the sample is representative, allowing for robust statistical inference. Overall, the study’s methodological rigor is significantly reinforced by this response quality.

4.2 Regression Results

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.732 ^a	.536	.512	.22304

a. Predictors: (Constant), Dialogue & conflict management mechanisms, Timely implementation of agreements, Transparency & trust-building
 Source: SPSS 27, (2026)

Table 2 presents the Model Summary which encapsulates how well the regression model fits the data. The value of R² (i.e., Coefficient of Determination), indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. Hence, based on the table, the R² of .536 means that 53.6% of the variance in ASUU-FGN Face-Off is explained by the three predictors (Dialogue and conflict management mechanisms, Timely implementation of agreements, Transparency and trust-building) included in the model. Thus, taken together, these predictors suggest that the model is statistically fit, and well-suited for making predictions and drawing meaningful insights from the data.

Table 3: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	165.489	3	55.163	51.894	.000 ^b
	Residual	391.208	368	1.063		
	Total	556.697	371			

a. Dependent Variable: ASUU-FGN Face-Off
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Dialogue and conflict management mechanisms, Timely implementation of agreements, Transparency and trust-building
 Source: SPSS 27, (2026)



Table 3 presents ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) output which helps to assess the significance of the model applied. Consequently, based on the ANOVA results, the F-statistic of 51.894 (3, 368) coupled with a p-value of .000, indicates that the combined effect of the three predictors (Dialogue and conflict management mechanisms, Timely implementation of agreements, Transparency and trust-building) is highly significant. This means that the model, as a whole, provides a meaningful explanation of the dependent variable and that the inclusion of these constructive collective bargaining factors contributes substantially to explaining the debates between ASUU and Federal Government of Nigeria. Thus, the results suggest that the model applied is statistically significant, thereby offering a reliable framework to proceed with further analysis.

Table 4: The Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.112	1.283		4.218	.213
Dialogue and conflict management mechanisms	-.376	.112	-.321	3.357	.000
Timely implementation of agreements	-.451	.134	-.298	3.366	.001
Transparency and trust-building	-.529	.121	-.347	4.372	.000

a. Dependent Variable: ASUU-FGN Face-Off

Source: SPSS 27, (2026).

4.3 Findings of the Study

Table 4 presents the coefficients of the multiple regression. The aim of this analysis is to understand how each dimension of constructive collective bargain (measured by Dialogue and conflict management mechanisms, Timely implementation of agreements, Transparency and trust-building) predict ASUU-FGN Face-Off.

From Table 4, the standardized coefficient for transparency and trust-building ($\beta = -.347$, $p = .000$) indicates a moderate negative and statistically significant influence on the ASUU–FGN face-off. This suggests that for every one-unit increase in transparency and trust-building, disputes are expected to decline by 34.7%. Being the variable with the largest absolute beta value, it exerts the strongest influence among the predictors, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and confirming that transparency and trust-building significantly reduce ASUU–FGN conflicts.



Taraba State University, Jalingo
Faculty of Management Sciences

ISSN NO. 1118-3527 for "Journal Of Management Science Research and Contemporary
Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

Similarly, dialogue and conflict management mechanisms recorded a significant effect ($\beta = -.321$, $p = .000$). This implies that strengthening dialogue and conflict management reduces disputes by 32.1%. Ranked second in influence, the result supports the rejection of the null hypothesis and affirms the importance of constructive engagement in mitigating ASUU–FGN face-offs.

Finally, timely implementation of agreements also showed a significant negative effect ($\beta = -.298$, $p = .001$), meaning that disputes are expected to decline by 29.8% with every unit increase in prompt and faithful implementation of agreements. Although this variable ranked third in influence, it remains a significant determinant, and the null hypothesis is accordingly rejected. In summary, all three dimensions transparency and trust-building, dialogue and conflict management, and timely implementation of agreements significantly reduce ASUU–FGN disputes, with transparency and trust-building exerting the strongest effect.

4.4 Discussions of Major Findings

The multiple regression analysis examined constructive collective bargaining as a solution to the ASUU–FGN face-off in Nigeria. Findings resonate with existing empirical literature on its role in promoting industrial harmony in higher education. Specifically, dialogue and conflict management mechanisms emerged as a significant factor in mitigating disputes ($\beta = -.376$, $p = .000$). This aligns with studies such as Nwokike et al. (2025), who reported that weak dialogue structures and poor grievance handling correlate with increased strike actions, and Osuagwu and Chukwuemeka (2024), who noted that reliance on threat-based bargaining perpetuates conflict. Similarly, the ILO (2023) emphasizes that constructive dialogue, mediation, and problem-solving approaches produce more sustainable resolutions than confrontational tactics.

The study also found that timely implementation of agreements significantly reduces the ASUU–FGN face-off ($\beta = -.451$, $p = .001$). This supports findings by Taiwo et al. (2024), who showed that delays in agreement execution undermine welfare and credibility, fueling strikes, and Adegbile (2024), who observed that faithful implementation promotes industrial harmony, cutting disruptions by 36%. The World Bank (2023) further identifies delays in fulfilling agreements as a major trigger of recurrent strikes between 2009 and 2022.

Lastly, transparency and trust-building exerted the strongest negative influence on disputes ($\beta = -.347$, $p = .000$). This is corroborated by Okebukola (2021), who linked opacity in negotiations such as the IPPIS versus UTAS debate to persistent strikes, and Eze and Adebayo (2022), who found that withholding fiscal information entrenched mistrust. Otopo (2022)



Taraba State University, Jalingo
Faculty of Management Sciences

ISSN NO. 1118-3527 for "Journal Of Management Science Research and Contemporary
Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

stressed the importance of open communication and budgetary disclosure, while Yusuf and Bello (2023) showed that transparency explained 42% of staff perceptions of negotiation legitimacy. Collectively, these findings underscore that transparency, timely implementation, and constructive dialogue are essential pillars for achieving lasting industrial harmony in Nigerian higher education.

5.1 Conclusions

The study unequivocally concludes that fostering transparency and trust-building, ensuring the timely implementation of agreements, and promoting constructive dialogue and conflict management mechanisms are essential for mitigating the ASUU-FGN face-off, with transparency and trust-building emerging as the most influential factor in fostering industrial harmony within Nigerian higher education.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the followings are recommended:

- i. The Federal Government and ASUU should prioritize enhancing transparency in all negotiation processes. This includes proactively disclosing budgetary allocations, sharing relevant fiscal information with academic staff, and ensuring open communication channels throughout negotiations. To build trust, both parties should commit to honest and transparent communication, avoiding any actions that could be perceived as withholding information or acting in bad faith. Regular stakeholder meetings and feedback sessions can further strengthen trust and ensure that all parties are informed and engaged.
- ii. The Federal Government must establish robust mechanisms to ensure the timely and complete implementation of agreements reached with ASUU. This requires dedicated budgetary provisions, efficient administrative processes, and a clear timeline for implementation. To avoid delays, both parties should agree on realistic timelines and milestones, and establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress. Any delays in implementation should be addressed promptly, with clear communication and remedial actions.
- iii. Both the Federal Government and ASUU should adopt and institutionalize constructive dialogue and conflict management mechanisms. This includes establishing formal channels for grievances, promoting mediation and conciliation processes, and training negotiators in collaborative bargaining techniques. Furthermore, the parties should move away from adversarial negotiation frameworks and embrace problem-



Taraba State University, Jalingo
Faculty of Management Sciences

ISSN NO. 1118-3527 for "Journal Of Management Science Research and Contemporary
Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

solving approaches. This can involve joint problem-solving workshops, regular dialogue sessions, and a commitment to finding mutually beneficial solutions.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The study focused on a limited set of variables. Other factors, such as government policies, economic conditions, and the broader political climate, may also influence the ASUU-FGN face-off. Additionally, the study may have been limited by the availability and quality of data, particularly regarding historical negotiations and agreement implementation. The findings may not be fully generalizable to all higher education institutions in Nigeria, as the specific dynamics of the ASUU-FGN relationship are unique. Moreover, the study may have been limited by the cross-sectional nature of the data, which may not fully capture the dynamic nature of the ASUU-FGN relationship over time.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the limitations highlighted above, the study suggests that future studies could include a wider range of variables, such as government policies, economic indicators, and the role of external stakeholders (e.g., student unions, civil society organizations). Similarly, the study suggests that future study should consider longitudinal studies that track the ASUU-FGN relationship over time so as to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Moreover, qualitative research, such as in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, is suggested to be undertaken as it could provide richer insights into the perspectives and experiences of those involved. Finally, comparative studies that examine the ASUU-FGN face-off in relation to similar disputes in other countries could provide valuable lessons and insights.



Taraba State University, Jalingo
Faculty of Management Sciences

ISSN NO. 1118-3527 for "Journal Of Management Science Research and Contemporary
Issues (JMSRCI) Vol 3 (1), 2026

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