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Integrating Islamic Work Ethics: A Solution to the Persistent ASUU Strikes in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Inclusivity of the Islamic law is felt in every aspect of human dealings. Employer-employee relations also attract the necessary attention to creating a friendly interaction that can foster a successful ending for the parties. As a means, certain roles and rights of each are recommended. The Nigeria education policy recognises university education as the apex where citizens can obtain the peak of academic certification. The government remains the employer of the public universities while staff are employees; both academic and non-academic, duo stakeholders have complementary responsibilities that must not suffer. The academic staff established the Academic Staff Union of the University (ASUU) in 1978 to cater for the welfare of its members. The union sets certain approaches to achieve the set aim and objectives and the most effective is the seizure of every academic activity by her member-institutions which is sometimes persistent. The present research work sets to x-ray the establishment of ASUU, highlight her aim and objectives, causes and effects of her strikes, and delve into Islamic work ethics to see its relevance to solving the incessant ASUU strikes in Nigeria. The descriptive research method and the library are used as instruments for data collection. The findings of this research reveal that both the employer and employee are not holistic in the discharge of their designed roles and are inconsiderate of the effects of their actions. Adoption of the Islamic worldview on the employer-employee relation is found to be worthy of being given a try by the government and ASUU and can subjugate the causes of incessant ASUU strikes, which contradicts the Islamic work ethics as identified. In conclusion, university education has always been designed to use the gown to develop the town but such can be realised when each stakeholder discharges its role responsibly.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a genuine instrument that plays a pivotal role towards the successful, progressive, and meaningful endeavours of

every member of a society individually and collectively. Maiwada views education as the acquisition of beneficial knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values and its application in

solving personal and social problems. By inference, various kinds of education could be sought through different means, however, it is only genuine when it is used for self-dependent and others. It is on this ground that the personal life of an educated and other members of the society would be impacted positively. In a formal setup, the acquisition of knowledge is believed to be tenable through orderly planned manners so that sequence of what should be learnt is feasibly achieved. (Maiwada 2006, 46-54). Qualitative education requires certain characteristics and elements that must be put into consideration that is; every stakeholder must have designed responsibilities, provision of necessary instruments and materials, creation of a well-ventilated and serene environment, sufficient budgeting and allocation for smooth-running of curricular and extra-curricular, provision of infrastructures that can accommodate every activity of every segment of an institution, putting necessary security measures and other facilities in place strategically and prioritising the welfare of every party and stakeholder.

Nigerian educational system has gone through a series of policies chiefly to realise a vision of educating every citizen who can use the 3H (head, heart, and hands) to contribute towards national development. However, what is currently tenable is the 9-3-4 coding primary-basic secondary, secondary, and tertiary system of education. Despite the changes in the mode of educational operation in Nigeria, scholars from different perceptions have faulted the outcome of the policies yet, the university education remains the apex level of education that one can attain with several years recommended. (Ape, Ahmed, Oyeyemi, Zakariyah, Hassan, & Atunde 2019, 112). The years recommended for the tertiary/university education have been four (4), though in some cases students at such level could spend three (3) or more than the recommended years based on the mode of entry and course to be offered.

University is a tertiary institution which is designed with multidisciplinary courses to equip students with the necessary information, knowledge, skills and training in an advanced manner to produce responsible

members of the society that would in turn contribute reasonably towards societal development. (Salihi. 2006, 80-81). The status of proprietary of the Nigerian universities, there are public and private. As it may be, the government remains an employer while members of staff stand as employees of the public university whereby each party has statutory roles to be played for the realisation of the set goals of the university establishment. (Ogbetta, Eke, & Ori 2017, 14-15). Private universities are either owned by an individual or a group of people being liable for the cost of running and profiting. For an efficient smooth-running of universities, each stakeholder is expected to discharge its designated roles without jeopardising rights and/or sabotaging the efforts of another. As a norm of every educational institution, staff of the Nigerian universities has two categories vis-a-vis academic and non-academic (teaching and non-teaching). In a real sense, each category has an associational body that is constitutionally reckoned with to oversee and labour for the welfare of its members according to the stated policy of the Trade Union cum association.

In the government universities, Federal and State, academic staff welfare are manned under the umbrella of the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU). The union was formed in 1978 succeeding the National Association of University Teachers (NAUT) as a way of continuing the struggles of the latter which was hitherto victimised by the military regime. The union has been active in agitating for the rights of its members utilising every resource, approach, and strategy at her disposal. A very landmark approach which the union has ever employed, to fight and struggle for what is assumed to be the rights of her members is strike. During the strike, almost every academic activity of member institutions was seized for the agreed period and the history could not erase the first strike being practised in the year 1988. (Ogbetta, Eke, & Ori 2017, 14). In one way or the other, the student's educational career is being outrageously affected. Against this background, this research is set to delve into the aims and objectives of ASUU, highlight some effects of frequent ASUU strikes on the members of ASUU, x-ray and proffer plausible

solutions from an Islamic perspective on employer-employee to curb the incessant ASUU strike actions as acts of each party which are instrumental in an incident would be appropriately addressed.

THE ASUU: A TERTIARY INSTITUTION-BASED UNION

Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is a legally reckoned with body of professionals that solely focuses on taking care of the university teachers. The organisation is a democratic trade union that sets several aims and objectives to achieve, vis-à-vis: fostering harmonious relations between the government as employer and its members, fostering peaceful relations among its members, watching and nursing the welfare of her members socially, politically, and professionally, securing viable socio-economy for her members, and orientating and creating grounds for her members to make meaningful contributions towards improvement of the affairs of the university system and national development. (ASUU Constitution). ASUU has elected thirteen (13) presidents who have coordinated her affairs from Professor I. O. Agbede as the pioneer president in 1978 and Professor Victor Sodeke Emmanuel since 2020 till the time of this research. However, it could be rightly reiterated that he enjoyed being re-elected in 2023 which is tantamount to being on the seat till 2026. (Qasim 2023).

Right from the onset, the union has proved herself to be ready to pursue and agitate for the rights of her members and standardisation of the university system utilising employable approaches which are within the ambit of the constitution. This was recorded when it waged struggles against the military dictatorship between 1978 and 1980 and the same surfaced during a series of civilian governments. (Japa 2022). President Muhammad Buhari (2015-2023) was not excluded from experiencing agitations of the ASUU in recommendations, requests, agitation, negotiating, and arguments on what were considered the rights of her members. The industrial ASUU strike was staged for a month between August and September 2017, three (3) months between November and February 2018, nine (9) months between

March and December 2020 (Ismaeel 2020) and eight (8) months between February 14, 2022, and October 14, 2022. (Jalingo 2022).

Surprisingly, for the fact that at the end of every ASUU strike, the government has been expected to pay salaries for the strike periods but it became phantom in the case of the 2022 ASUU strike when the government employed the "No Work, No Pay!" policy for the eight months strike.

CHALLENGES OF ASUU

The most significant member of the university community is the academic staff without whom the essence of the university system will be forfeited. The academic staff of every university is charged with enormous responsibilities, the core of which are teaching and research. To fulfil the mandate of the academic in any university, certain provisions have to be made by the founders of these institutions. These include the provision of a conducive learning environment, adequate infrastructural facilities, provision of security of life and properties, staff welfare, development and motivation, and provision, accessibility of research funds among others. Unlike what is obtainable in other parts of the world even within the African continent, the academic staff of Nigerian universities faces a lot of challenges that affect their effectiveness in the discharge of their mandatory roles as "advanced" teachers. Though some affect the entire body of the ASUU while some are peculiar to individual members of the union, however, the challenges of ASUU include but are not limited to the following:

Inadequate funding, over the years, inadequate funding has been one of the major problems facing the Academic Staff Union of the Universities in the country. Apart from the fact that many universities, both public and private universities are being established in the country, the conditions of the public ones especially are not to write home about. Mostly because the materials needed for effective teaching and learning are grossly inadequate. (Muhammad-Busayri & Suleiman 2023, 94-98). Jacob, Jegede & Musa posit that the levels of infrastructural decay in these universities have been a major point of concern to the

ASUU. Inadequate funding of the university has resulted in a shortage of basic amenities in the universities such as the provision of office complexes for lecturers, construction of adequate lecture rooms for the students, provision of laboratory paraphernalia and other practical materials for the science students and lots of more. The situation has become worse to the extent that some lecturers in some public universities do not have personal offices for themselves. Similarly, epileptic power supply restricted access to internet facilities and many other issues relating to poor funding save that the academics will have to engage in self-funding to discharge their official assignments and to meet the promotional requirements and prerequisites. (Jacob, Jegede, & Musa 2021, 235).

Motivation is one of the ways to get the best out of the employees of any category. Jacob and others opined that motivation is the propelling force in the behaviour of individuals. It is believed that motivation is what makes people undertake certain activities, persist in such activities and bring them to a conclusive end. (Jacob, Jegede, & Musa. Op. Cit. 230). Considering the enormous tasks ahead of all the academic staff in Nigerian universities about the monthly wages being received, it would not be an exaggeration to conclude that they receive a salary that is not commensurate with what they laboured for. Can someone imagine that many professors of university do not receive five hundred thousand naira (₦500,000.00) as monthly wages despite the prevailing economic realities in the country? It is no more news that ten thousand and five hundred (10,500) professors are paid ₦4.8 billion per annum implying that each earns about ₦457,142.857 monthly as of 2020. (Charles, 2020). Of course, normal salary and earned allowances scheme, payment, and increments play reasonable roles in motivating the ASUU members which would prompt productivity and command of dignity as professionals.

As a proposed way of ameliorating the ASUU strikes in 2020, after a series of meetings with government and nongovernment committees, President Muhammadu Buhari pledged to implement agreements reached. It is glaringly

factual that the causes of ASUU's incessant strikes are not restricted to self-centeredness as misconstrued by some government emissaries and the public as tagged as salary issues. This is very evident in the matters discussed by the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) with the President. The nongovernmental religious body enumerated while briefing the President that:

"...the bone of contention between the Union and Federal Government centred on eight issues including inconclusive renegotiation of the 2009 ASUU-FGN agreement, UTAS, IPPIS and distortion in salary payment challenges... visitation panels to Federal Universities report issues, funding for revitalisation of public universities and promotion arrears..." (National Universities Commission 2022).

Alas! The promises of the government are not only deceitful but a "divide and rule" approach as it licensed Congress of University Academics (CONUA) in 2022. The union was initiated by a set of academic staff who carved out of ASUU and were licensed to function as a counter union "to clip the wings of the Academic Staff Union of University", nonetheless it is believed that such action could not but cause more damages to the system. (Alagbe 2022).

Another major challenge facing the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria is the issue of larger class attendants. However, the regulatory body of universities in Nigeria, the National University Commission (NUC), provided the Benchmark Minimum Standard (BMAS) for the teacher/student ratio in every university in the country in 2007. The BMAS stipulated for the staff/student ratio in science is 1:20, 1:15 in agricultural and environmental sciences and 1:30 in education, management sciences, law, and Arts. This is however a contrast of what is obtainable in the majority of the Universities in Nigeria. For instance, the faculty/student ratio of the National Open University as of 2014 was 1:363, the University of Abuja was 1:122, and the University of Lagos was 1:114 and so on. (Jacob, Jegede, & Musa. Op. Cit. 234). An attempt to compare these figures to what is obtainable in some highly rated universities in

the world revealed that many of the Nigerian universities are understaffed.

Management of some of the universities in Nigeria also constituted major challenges to the academic staff of universities. Expectedly, one would have maintained that the management of all the universities in Nigeria are also members of the academic staff, maladministration, greed and selfishness on the part of these management teams have been identified as one of the major problems facing the academic staff of Nigerian universities. There is indeed a problem of inadequate funding from the parts of the government yet the little fund released by the government is being mismanaged by some management of the universities. For instance, the TETFUND interventions in the universities which were meant for the betterment of all staff in the university were being mismanaged to the benefit of the allies of the management teams to the detriment of their political foes. It is common practice in many Nigerian universities that it is only during the accreditation period that fund is released for the major renovation of Nigerian universities. It is pertinent to ask whether the money being released by these managements is just being given to them by the government or it is at their disposal before the period.

In the same vein, political and social factors have also been identified to ignite the challenges of the Academic Staff Union of Universities in Nigeria. The appointments of principal officers in Nigerian universities are highly political. Administrative competency is not usually considered before appointing the principal officers. It is not out of point to admit that some principal officers are administrators of note as they proved to be distinct in the discharge of their duties academically and administratively. The likes of late Prof. A. A. Gwandu, Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto, Prof. Peter Oke Bukola, Prof. Ishaq Olanrewaju Oloyede University of Ilorin, Ilorin (Imam, Adebayo, & Ali-Agan 2018, vi-xxii) are pointers in this regard. However, political influence on the management of the public universities is worrisome. Likewise, the appointment and promotion of some academic staff are, as well politicised which hinders the management from recruiting

more competent personnel into the system. Another issue is the carrying capacity of each university which was uncalled for but, unfortunately, the problem of overcrowded classes, which is against the National Universities Commission (NUC) policy has been attributed to politicisation of the admission exercise.

Furthermore, insecurity is another major problem facing the activities of the academic staff union of Nigerian universities as it ravages almost every stratum of the country. The activities of militants in the Niger Delta and southeast areas of the country, the insurgent in the North-East, banditry in the north-west and recently, kidnapping in the north-central and southwest have been a source of concern to smooth running of academic programmes in some of the Nigerian universities. Muhammad-Busayri and Fahm maintain that:

Security challenges have become a tumoric matter that makes every nook and cranny of Nigeria unsafe, in-house and outside. It is an undeniable fact that insecurity is a global problem but the Nigerian experience seems intensive as hardly there would be a day or week without claiming the lives and properties of civilians and military personnel. The current security problem of Nigeria is much alarm that people are attacked at home, farms, travelling, offices, and even barracks in either northern, southern, eastern, or western regions of the country. Various incidents of how people were abducted, killed, shipped off pipelines, raped, mutilated and many other ways through which perpetrators exercised their missions. These and many other insecurity incidents have resulted in a series of unrest. As a means of investigating and uncovering what might factorised the security challenges in Nigerian, scholars have enumerated some, based on their perceptions. Perhaps, the following includes poverty, misconception and misapplication of the religious message, inadequate funding and sub-improvisation of the required arms for the military forces, excessive love of mundanity and worldly materials among others. (Muhammad-Busayri & Fahm. 2023, 52-53).

Insecurity has not only affected the academic staff of Nigerian universities but every region, institution, individual, personnel and other segments of the Nigerian community. However, Insecurity has not only affected the academic staff of Nigerian universities but also every region, institution, individual, and segment of the Nigerian community. A series of reports regarding the murders of university professors highlights the dangerous conditions these professionals face. For instance, Egba reported that Dr Sherifat Funmilola Adefolalu was tragically killed in her residence in Gbaiko, Niger State, on October 29, 2023 (Egba 2023).

Similarly, Dr. Comfort Adokwe, a lecturer in the Faculty of Administration at Nasarawa State University, was kidnapped and held captive from Sunday to Wednesday, October 22 to 25, 2023. Her family had to pay a ransom of 5 million naira (₦5,000,000.00) for her release (Sunday 2023).

In another distressing incident, Chibuiké reported that Prof. Godwin Emezue, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics) of Abia State University in Uturu, was kidnapped on Friday, January 26, 2024. He remained in captivity until Wednesday, February 7, 2024, when he regained his freedom after a substantial ransom was paid (Chibuiké 2024). A series of reports of the murder of university Dons are pointers to how the lives of the professionals are at stake. For instance, Egba reported Dr Sherifat Funmilola Adefolalu being slaughtered in her residence at Gbaiko, Niger state on October 29, 2023. (Egba 2023). Similarly, Dr Comfort Adokwe was said to have regained freedom from kidnappers after payment of 5-million-naira (₦5,000,000.00) ransom by her family members. The victim was a lecturer at the Faculty of Administration at the Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Hence, she was under captive between Sunday and Wednesday, 22nd – 25th October 2023. (Sunday 2023). As if that was not enough, Chibuiké reported another saddening incident of how the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics) of Abia State University, Uturu, Prof. Godwin Emezue was kidnapped on Friday, 26th January 2024 and remained under the captivity of hoodlums until Wednesday, 7th February 2024 when he

regained freedom after receiving a huge amount of money. (Chibuiké 2024).

In the same vein, assault, disrespect, and molestation which ASUU members experience are very disgusting and inhumane. A situation of how a lecturer was beaten, punched, strangled, and assaulted in 2021 by a university student is living evidence of sorts of chaotic experiences that professionals go through in the course of their official duties. Even though the culprit of such misconduct had been expelled from the University of Ilorin where the incident took place, the traumatic experience became historic in the life of the victim. (Akinyemi 2021). These among others refer to how ASUU as a body and its members face various challenges in the course of canvassing for their rights, requesting the rights of their students, and discharging their official responsibilities.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF ASUU

However, the ASUU is popularly known for incessant strikes as if such is the only aim for which it was created. Contrarily, the union as an academic body has recorded a huge success in the education sector, especially through the university system and national development of the country. In the official tweeter handle of the Union @ASUUNGR, a caption tagged, "ASUU and her Achievements in the Nigerian Universities System" was captioned on January 31, 2019. The ASUU national office enumerated some of her achievements, one of which yielded the creation of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) in the year 2011 as a result of her agitation and demands. Admittedly, before the establishment of TETFUND, the infrastructural development at all the tertiary education levels was not to go by. A mere visit to all the government-owned tertiary institutions in the country would have revealed their conditions without TETFUND as virtually all the major infrastructures are being provided by the TETFUND regularly.

It was noted that no relent agitations of the union prompted the Federal Ministry of Education to set up the Prof. Mahmood Yakubu-led committee on November 1, 2012, on Needs Assessment of Public Universities. Through this initiative, many capital projects

were constructed while some of the existing ones were renovated in Nigerian tertiary institutions. (The Nation 2018). For instance, at the University of Ilorin, through Needs Assessments, projects like the construction of the Science Laboratory and the administrative offices for the staff were constructed while the existing Science Lecture Theatre was renovated. The latest development on the removal of tertiary institutions in general and universities especially in December 2023 from Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) members is another major achievement of the ASUU. It is factual that it was not only ASUU that envisaged incompatibility of the IPPIS to the Nigerian community since its inception in October 2006 but the union's (ASUU) contention, constructive criticism and rigorous rejection became enormous when her members began experiencing negative and impoverishing effects of the system. (Adeduyite 2023). The consideration of the government on the exemption of tertiary institutions from the IPPIS, notwithstanding is viewed to be worthy as believed to birth the constitutional autonomy of the Nigerian universities and other statutory rights that would prompt smooth running of the institutions. (Vanguard 2023).

Another silent achievement of the union could be inferred from how her members coordinated cooperatively even in the period of tribulation. Despite the meagre amount of salary that the lecturers earn monthly, they command respect as members of ASUU even in the period of catastrophe. This fact was glaring during the 2021 ASUU strike, which lasted for about eight (8) months without salary. Of course, the majority of them solely relied on monthly salaries, and even at that, their spirit of cooperation and sacrifice was enduringly displayed as no member was reported quitting the profession despite the destructive and never-forgotten effect! (Tyohemba. n.d).

The achievements of ASUU will remain incomplete if her productivity is mined from the record. As mentioned above, the major duties of the ASUU members as employed lecturers are lecturing and training the students and carrying out a series of research as academics. By implication, it is their

assignment to produce enthusiastic learning members of the Nigerian society that would contribute toward the development of the country in their various areas of specialisation. The number of graduates that the Nigerian university produces annually attests to the productivity of the ASUU members. It could be argued that it was the result of the union members' professional productivity that contributed to national development from various perspectives. Hence, it is acknowledging and showcasing this beyond Nigeria that metamorphoses to "Japa" – fleeing beyond the shores of Nigeria. (Okunade & Awosusi 2023, 1-18).

EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATION: AN ISLAMIC PANACEA

Allah (SWT), as One Who works always enjoins man as His viceroy to labour for himself and his family. The primary sources of Islamic law are replete with directives and narrations on the matter. In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah describes the earth to be cultivatable for man to discover its treasures for earnings (Q.67:15). Prophets Shuayb and Musa are reported to initially related as employer and employee before their partnership resulted to in-law-ship as agreed in terms and conditions of their contract. The two parties proved to be trustworthy of emulation as they did not only have clear conditions of contract (service) but complied with it to the letter. The Qur'an mentions (meaning):

"Then there came to him one of them, walking shyly. She said: "Verily, my father calls you that he may reward you for having watered (our flocks) for us." So, when he came to him and narrated the story, he said: "Fear you not. You have escaped from the people who are wrongdoers."(25) And said one of them (the two women): "O my father! Hire him! Verily, the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy."(26) He said: "I intend to wed one of these two daughters of mine to you, on condition that you serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten years, it will be (a favour) from you. But I intend not to place you under a difficulty. If Allah wills, you will find me one of the righteous."(27) He (Musa) said: "That (is settled) between me and you: whichever of the

two terms I fulfil, there will be no injustice to me, and Allah is Surety over what we say.”(28) Then, when Musa had fulfilled the term, and was travelling with his family, he saw a fire in the direction of At-Tur. He said to his family: “Wait, I have seen a fire; perhaps I may bring to you from there some information, or a burning firebrand that you may warm yourselves.” (Q.28:25-29).

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) pedagogically informed his companions to have served as a hired labourer even before his prophethood. He described hard work, labour and working to earn for living to be attracting more blessings rather than begging and idleness.

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, *“Allah did not send any prophet but shepherded sheep.” His companions asked him, “Did you do the same?” The Prophet replied, “Yes, I used to shepherd the sheep of the people of Mecca for some Qirats.” (Sahih Bukhari 2009, 507).*

From time immemorial, people have been embarking on one form of business transaction or the others. Descendants of Prophet Adam and Eve from the Garden of Paradise signalled the beginning of work in the history of humanity. The work at this period, though, crude and primitive, was meant to satisfy three major basic needs of man namely, feeding, shelter and childcare. The socialization of work was not in existence at this period as men were mainly hunters and farmers while the women were mostly gatherers. However, with the population expansion, there arose the need to increase food production and provide some basic services to the people. The introduction of technology subsequently led to the specialisation of work. The invention of metal tools and weapons during the Bronze Age heralded the specialisation of works and thus, it became the norm among farmers, hunters, blacksmiths and other workers in ancient times.

The above reveals the fact that Islam frowns at joblessness of any form since such could not make any iota contribution towards societal development which a worthy viceroy of Allah ought to do. This, in essence, debunks the misconstrue of some individuals who claim

that *salat, fasting, and supplications* are the only factors for economic and financial growth. (Bello 2015, 116-117). The religion of Islam exploits every means available to promote self-reliance and labour believing that such qualities would make man proud of being a responsible member of the society and prompt rapid growth of the society, hence individual capacity and diversity in approach would be geared towards making national development realistic. (Ali 2014, 553-554).

Since Islam acknowledges proprietary over an establishment that could seek for service of others as employer(s) and employability of expertise as employee(s) (Q.43:32) every contracting party (employer and employee) to be focused on the realisation of their common goal, without jeopardising and sabotaging efforts each other. The religion outlines certain conditions and ethics that must serve as a watchword for each. In other words, Islam maintains that the nature of man is dynamic which could affect his activities or collective dealings, hence, to control any interpersonal and employer-employee businesses there must be conditions and ethics that will govern their relationship. Muhammad-Bikr posits offer and acceptance, clear terms of references, dedication and sacrifice, fulfilment of promises, productivity, payment of wages, giving and accepting mutual advice, making and obeying rules and regulations of the contract (service) honestly, mutual respect and cooperation among the parties, and unity among the employees, and discharge of duties professionally to the best of one’s abilities. (Ismail 1417H/1997, 67-74).

“The worker, if employed and takes what is right and gives what is right, is like Mujāhid (Struggler in the cause of Allah) till he returns home.” (Aṭ-Ṭabarāni 1983, 53).

Furthermore, some similarities are observed in the Western work ethics and this could be as a result of the fact that Judaism and Christianity, which are the predominant religions of the West have the same origin as Islam. (Syed & Ali. n.d. 458). To some extent, the three religions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam have some fundamentals when it comes to work ethics. Contextually, Islamic work ethics is extraordinarily unique in approach to

the matter. For instance, discrimination based on race and gender is found in the Western work ethics which by implication gives room for social classes. In Islamic work ethics, human diversity is viewed as a characteristic of divinity and style of Allah's creativity and sign of majesty, hence "what is good for goose, is good for gander". On the provision of the Qur'an, there should not be discrimination on this basis as all human races are offspring of a single soul, Adam (Q.4:1):

(Meaning): *"O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you."*

In his last sermon, Prophet Muhammad emphasised the importance of human unity and vividly enjoined the Muslim *Ummah* to refrain from discriminating against each other but work for brotherliness regardless of race, gender, language etc.

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over a black nor does a black have any superiority over white except by piety and good action." (Nadwi 1429H./2008, 227).

The second caliph, Umar bin Al-Khattāb, was known for his administrative skills. He underscored the importance of behavioural and moral aspects along with performance potential in selecting employees for jobs. He is reported to have said:

"When a person is in charge of Muslim affairs and appointed for reasons of favouritism or kinship relationship [nepotism], then he cheats Allah, the Prophet, and the community." (Syed & Ali n.d. 459).

RELEVANCE OF ISLAMIC VIEWS ON EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATION TO CURBING ASUU STRIKE

It is observed that Islamic views on work ethics about employer and employee partnership are void of injustice, enslavement, cheating, jeopardy of rights, sentimentality, lies, sacrilege, disrespect, assault, religious bigotry and all sorts of defaming characters from either party (employer and employee). This as it may be, suggests that government, administration, and ASUU members ought to work towards realising the goals and principles that surround the establishment of tertiary institutions in general and universities to be specific. In other words, the "promise and fail" attitude of the government which has been a major cause of ASUU as reflected in the nonfulfillment of salary increments for a decade ought to be honestly addressed.

Employers can motivate their employees in different ways. These include the provision of a conducive working environment, provision of necessary devices for the tasks to be performed, prompt payment of salary/wages commensurably as at when due, praising of the employee, and efficient increase of salary/wages of the employee. Islam encourages the employer to pay his employee a living wage that will be enough to take care of his basic needs. While emphasizing the imperative of motivation in the employer-employee relationship, Syed and Ali submitted thus:

"As noted earlier, according to Islamic Sharia, workers should be paid a living wage to satisfy their basic everyday needs. Furthermore, regarding public servants, it is the responsibility of an Islamic state to provide for all requirements of their livelihood, as this will facilitate their devotion to work. The celebrated Umayyad Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz (682-720) said: whoever undertakes a public job, and has no house, should have a house, and if he has no wife, should get married, and if he has no beast to ride, should have one." (Syed & Ali n.d. 460).

Among the approaches that Islam encourages for both the employer and employee is mutual consultation. The religion of Islam regards the mutual and harmonious relationship in work as crucial as letting a thousand souls survive. Hence, it accords importance to all major

stakeholders in the labour industry. Islam encourages the employer to consult with the employee with respect to any decision that affects their business especially. (Hayat & Siddiqui n.d. 102). This will increase the level of understanding and remove rancour between them. Honestly speaking, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been adopting this approach which is in line with the Islamic work ethics. The number of resolutions reached between the government and the union over the years are products of consultation. Of course, the consultation has yielded positive results, especially in the formation of TETFund. It has also been adopting the system of advising the government on some important national issues. The ASUU members being experts in the field of education offer periodic advice on the educational development of the country. Hence, it becomes imperative that the government view and accommodate the professionals as partners in progress by believing in their professional prowess not only as citizens but as stakeholders in national development from another perspective. In the Qur'an, Allah enjoins people to seek the opinion of the experts in any given matter.

Cooperation is another principle of the Islamic work ethic that is adopted by the Academic Staff Union of the Universities in Nigeria. There cannot be any development in an atmosphere of animosity. Cooperation between the employer and employee is the only yardstick that can ensure progress in the workplace. There are areas that need much understanding by both the government and ASUU. For instance, it was the cooperation of the ASUU with the government that resulted in the 2009 agreement between them. This is probably because the ASUU saw some level of sincerity in the government positions then and realized that it was not possible to fulfil all the demands at that time.

Justice and Fair play are other principles of Islamic work ethic that are being adopted by the ASUU. Islam encourages both the employer and employee to embrace the principles of justice and fair play. It is on this premise that one sees ASUU demanding salary increments and other welfare packages in relation to what is enjoyed by the political

office incumbents. The consideration of ASUU's demand on the exclusion of universities from the IPPIS deserves commendations yet implementation of the university autonomy should be effective. Ordinarily, one may not be against the creation of the ASUU as a body for the defence, agitation, and coordination of its members within the dictate of Nigeria's Trade Unions Act. This as it may be is similar to *ḥilfu al-fuḍūl* which explains how the Prophet (SAW) in collaboration with his like-minds coordinated and mobilised his colleagues to uphold justice and sanitise the Makkan society. Nadwi succinctly put the historic event of *ḥilfu al-fuḍūl*:

"An affluent person, 'Āsim Ibn Wā'ill, had oppressed a poor traveller from the tribe of Zubayd. A few inhabitants of Makkah Mukarramah formed a committee to assist the oppressed person and other such people who had been deprived of their rights. Rasūlullah was also a member of this committee, and whenever there was any such affair pertaining to the rights of the oppressed, orphans or any such issues whether domestic or foreign by nature, Rasūlullah never hesitated to uphold the cause of justice. When people witnessed the character and trustworthiness of Rasūlullah they began to trust him to such an extent that they would often leave their valuable commodities and property in his care for safekeeping." (Nadwi. 1429H./2008, 27).

The above is one of the incidents referring to how the Prophet (SAW) not only supported non-Muslims but participated in the course of justice, truth, peacemaking, solidarity and societal serenity and development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper has delved into the Islamic worldview on employer-employee relations, the birth and essence of the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) in Nigeria, and the relevance of the latter to the former. It was confirmed that the union is a constitutionally reckoned-with body and had been a born of series of agitations and claims of rights as employees of the government. Ordinarily, the body has numerous designed manners and approaches towards acquainting her

employer with situations of things that mainly affect the educational system, clamouring and requesting for the rights of her members. Nonetheless, the union's requests are only heard when resorted to strike – abandoning duties which consequently cause back to university educational activities.

So that the ASUU strike and its menace become a matter of the past, the paper recommends that:

1. The parties should see each other as partners towards the national development of the country rather than being hostile and foes since that would have drastic retrogression on various sectors of the country.
2. The government as employer of the ASUU members should believe in the intellectual prowess of its employees and bits of advice given should be considered honestly rather than being trashed out;
3. The ASUU as a body of employees should improvise means through which its employer could understand her plights emphatically and requests since they affect infrastructure, national economy, education, politics, welfare and others. It is factual that a university is a progenitor of other institutions yet Islam would not see it embarrassing when a “senior seeks advice from a junior” since Federal Colleges of Education unions are to some extent successful in approaching their employer, hence it could be beneficial that the ASUU consult the Colleges Of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) among others the modalities employed to tackle similar challenges yet they could overcome them reasonably.
4. Of course, it would be outrageously disheartening when see redundant workers earning than productive workers! In view of this fact, the paper solicits that the government should have an honest rework on the salary of ASUU members believing that this would go a long way in putting an everlasting solution to the ASUU strike in Nigeria and would make it more productive as a stakeholder in the national development.

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