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FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL AND THE WELL-BEING OF PEOPLE IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract

The removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria has had a profound impact on the well-being of its citizens, influencing economic stability, household/personal income, and access to essential goods and services. While the policy aims to reduce government expenditure and stimulate economic growth, it has led to an immediate surge in fuel prices, triggering inflation in transportation, food and other basic commodities. Hence, the study investigates the effect of fuel subsidy removal on the well-being of Nigerians living in the country, with specific focus on Uyo Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State. The objective was to ascertain whether the removal fuel subsidy affected the people's ability to afford food, shelter and healthcare. Using a questionnaire-based survey, information was elicited from 382 (three hundred and eighty-two) respondents on the impact of fuel subsidy removal on their well-being. Simple percentages, frequency counts and chi-square were employed to analyse data gathered. Findings from the study revealed a significant shift in personal financial management (income and savings), hence the inability of people to afford food, shelter as well as healthcare. The study also revealed an overall decline in the standard of living of the people living in Uyo Local Government Area. The study recommended among others that government should adopt good food security measures such as subsidised agricultural input, to provide farmers with subsidies on seeds, fertilizers, and equipment which will reduce production cost; and investment in public healthcare should be prioritised in order to make services more affordable to the people as this will reduce out-of- pocket expenses.

Keywords: Fuel Subsidy, Fuel Subsidy Removal, Well-being, Cost of Living, Uyo Local Government.

Introduction

Nigeria being one of the largest oil producing countries in Africa paradoxically depends on imported refined petroleum products due to its underperforming refineries. This reliance on imports has made the cost of petrol highly volatile and subject to international market fluctuations. However, fuel subsidy, has been a mechanism used by successive government or administration to shield consumers from the unpredictability of oil price fluctuations and it has also played a role in stabilizing domestic fuel prices and mitigating inflationary pressures. Historically, fuel subsidies in Nigeria have been perceived as one of the privileges citizens receive from the government, especially in light of the inconsistent and unreliable electricity supply in the country. The removal of these subsidies resulted in a significant portion of an individual's daily budget being allocated to cover the soaring cost of petrol, which would in turn, force many to heavily rely on petrol generators. However, it is worth noting that these subsidies have placed a considerable economic burden on Nigeria, with an estimated cost of $10 billion annually as of 2022 (Falana and Ojo, 2023). Nigeria's experience with fuel subsidies dates back to the 1970s, following the nationalization of the petroleum industry and the subsequent boom in oil revenues. With the emergence of oil as a significant source of government revenue, successive administrations introduced fuel subsidies as a means to provide affordable energy to the populace. These subsidies were initially viewed as a social welfare measure, aimed at alleviating the burden of high fuel prices on consumers, particularly in a country where transportation and energy costs play a pivotal role in everyday life. However, the sustainability of fuel subsidies came into question as Nigeria grappled with economic challenges, including fiscal deficits, inflationary pressures, and macro-economic instability (Otu *et al.* 2024).

The oil price shocks of the 1980s and 1990s exposed the vulnerabilities of Nigeria's oil-dependent economy, highlighting the need for reforms to enhance fiscal sustainability and reduce reliance on volatile oil revenues. Despite these challenges, fuel subsidies persisted as a politically sensitive issue, with successive administrations hesitant to implement comprehensive reforms due to concerns about social unrest and political backlash. The Goodluck Jonathan led administration attempted to enforce fuel subsidy removal in 2012, and nationwide protests and social unrest was the result. However, on May 29 2023, President Bola Tinubu, in his inaugural address declared, amongst other things that fuel subsidy had gone. According to the President, the subsidy could no longer justify its ever-increasing costs in the wake of drying resources, hence funds saved shall be reallocated into better investment in public infrastructure, education, health care and jobs that will materially improve the lives of millions, (Francis 2014 cited in Otu *et al*. 2024). The president remarks had thrown Nigerians, particularly those in Uyo LGA (local government area) into a phase of severe hardship as rightly presaged by Onuoha 2023. Hence, this paper examines the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the well-being of Nigerians, particularly those residing in Uyo Local Government Area.

Statement of the Problem

The removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria has been one of the most significant political and economic issues in the country, particularly in 2023. It has significantly impacted the well-being of citizens, exacerbating economic and social challenges. While the subsidy was unsustainable and riddled with inefficiencies, its removal has led to a sharp increase in the cost of petrol, triggering inflation and escalating the cost of living for millions of Nigerians and the inhabitants of Uyo Local Government Area in particular, especially those in the low

and middle-income bracket. Many people now face reduced purchasing power, inability to access healthcare, accommodation problems, higher transportation and food cost disproportionately affecting the people. Despite promises of palliatives and compensation by the government, the implementation of these measures has been slow and insufficient, leaving citizens grappling with economic hardship. Additionally, it has been argued the fund realised from the subsidy has not been used effectively and transparently to improve essential services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This is as a result of the fact that these funds are politically shared among governors to embark on series of human impacted projects. Regrettably, these funds are channelled into other political interests by some governors thereby leaving the problems (arising from the removal of subsidy) unsolved. This has raised questions among scholars as to ascertain the extent to which fuel subsidy removal has impacted on the general wellbeing of the citizenry. Based on the above raised issues, the study is guided by the following objectives.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, the study examines the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the well-being of people living in Uyo Local Government Area. Specifically, the study seeks to;

i. Examine the impact of fuel subsidy removal on food affordability by the people of Uyo Local Government Area.
ii. Examine the effect of fuel subsidy removal on the people's ability to afford shelter in Uyo Local Government Area.
iii. Ascertain if fuel subsidy removal has reduced people chances of accessing healthcare in Uyo Local Government Area.

Research Hypotheses

i. Fuel subsidy removal is likely to influence peoples' affordability of food in Uyo Local Government Area.
ii. People ability to afford shelter in Uyo Local Government area tends to be affected by fuel subsidy removal.
iii. Reduced healthcare accessibility by the people of Uyo Local Government Area is likely a function of fuel subsidy removal.

Review of Related Concepts and Literature

Subsidy/Fuel Subsidy: A subsidy is any policy that keeps consumer prices for commodities below market rates while keeping producer prices above market rates (Kotchen, 2021). It refers to aid provided to organizations or people by the government in the form of money, a tax break, or a decrease in the price of products and services (Holton, 2012). The fundamental goal of subsidies is to assist companies and individuals in getting the necessary goods and services that they would not otherwise be able to afford. There are many distinct types of subsidies, both direct and indirect that affects pricing which are grants, price restrictions, and tax reductions are examples of subsidies that have immediate effects (Barany and Grigonyte, 2015). Subsidy exists when the government helps the consumers of a particular product to pay a price lower than the prevailing market price of that commodity (Couharde, 2023). Musa (2009), sees subsidy as a kind of market manipulation whereby the government fixes the price of the commodity below its actual market price and pays the difference to the retailers. In this case, the government fixes the pump price of fuel below the actual market price and the difference is paid to the importers and marketers by the

government. Subsidy exists when the government helps the consumers of a particular product to pay a price lower than the prevailing market price of that commodity (Couharde, 2023). When subsidies are in place, consumers would pay below the market price per litre of the petroleum product. Globally, there are debates about fuel subsidy because of its huge amount and its effect on citizens welfare and the fiscal health of a nation.

The term fuel is a generic name that refers to any material used to power a machine or equipment. Fuel is basically used as sources of energy through which human activities are undertaken. However, what is regarded as a fuel may vary from situation to situation. A fuel may include nuclear, bio and fossil, and in some other contexts it may be Gasoline, Kerosene, diesel or Premium Motor Spirit (petrol). Fuel in this paper denotes the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) popularly known as petrol. The PMS is a major source of energy in the Nigerian economy. It is used as a source of energy for over 90% of motor vehicles involved in transportation of goods and persons (Oladimeji and Umar 2024). It is also the preferred energy source for generating sets in many small scale businesses and households as alternative to electricity. Fuel subsidy is a government discount on the market price of fossil fuel to make consumers pay less than the prevailing market price of fuel (Ovaga and Okechukwu, 2022). This means that a fraction of the price that consumers are supposed to pay for the use of petroleum products is paid by the government so as to reduce the price burden. Fuel subsidy can be properly defined as government effort in paying for the difference between the pump price of fuel at the petrol station and the actual cost of importation of the product. So, by paying the difference, the government enables fuel to be sold at a lower price to help ease the burden of its people especially lower-income groups, A Fuel subsidy is a grant of financial aid from the government used to maintain the low price of petroleum products (Ozili *et al*. 2023).

Fuel subsidy refers to a government policy designed to reduce the retail price of fuel below the market equilibrium by compensating oil marketers or producers for the difference. This mechanism aims to make fuel affordable for consumers, thus lowering the cost of transportation, production, and energy-dependent goods (Adenikinju, 2012). Subsidies are often justified on social welfare grounds, especially in developing countries, where high fuel prices could significantly impact low-income households (Ebrahim, 2019). However, fuel subsidies in Nigeria have been criticized for fostering inefficiencies, corruption, and fiscal burdens on government budgets (Adenikinju, 2014). The policy has historically been a double-edged sword: while it cushions consumers from global oil price volatility, it also distorts market prices and discourages investment in alternative energy sources (Onyeiwu and Akinyemi, 2018). The removal of such subsidies, therefore, aims to correct these distortions but risks immediate socio-economic shocks, particularly for vulnerable populations (Udoakah and Imoisi, 2023).

The Concept of Well-being

In a very broad sense, well-being is a good, satisfactory, and desirable state of existence or life. It represents a personal aspect of the quality of life. Wellbeing is multidimensional, covering aspects of life including housing, income, work and job quality, health, knowledge and skills, civic engagement, social connections, safety and work-life-balance. A person's wellbeing can be influenced by environmental, social and economic factors at the individual, family and community level, and each person's unique circumstances and experiences contributes to their wellbeing (OECD 2020). It encompasses various aspects of human experience, including physical (good health, proper nutrition and sleep etc), mental and

emotional (low stress level, emotional stability self-awareness and acceptance), social (supportive relationships with family, friends and community, sense of belonging), and spiritual dimensions (sense of purpose and meaning in life, mindfulness, gratitude and inner peace). Well-being is not merely the absence of disease but a dynamic state of thriving, balance, and fulfilment.

Impacts of Subsidy Removal on Food Affordability

Nigeria has struggled to control its fuel subsidies, a policy with significant impacts on economic sectors like food prices and agriculture. Fuel subsidies have strained Nigeria's budget and distorted market dynamics, despite their intent to make energy and transportation more affordable. The removal of these subsidies has notably affected food prices and the cost of living. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023) report pointed out that food inflation rate in May of 2023 stood at 24.82 percent on a year-on-year basis, driven by increases in prices of essential commodities like oil and fat, yam, bread, cereals, fish, and meat. This underscores the cascading effects of subsidy removal on various sectors of the economy, potentially exacerbating inflationary pressures. The analysis of month-on-month and year-on-year data highlights the upward trajectory of inflation in the wake of subsidy removal. Year-on-year inflation in May 2023 was 4.70 percentage points higher compared to May 2022, and month on- month inflation in May 2023 was 0.03 percent higher than in April 2023 (NBS, 2023). This trend indicates that the subsidy removal has contributed to persistent inflationary pressures. Given the importance of fuel in daily activities, subsidies ensure access and affordability, especially when crude oil prices are volatile. Additionally, subsidies lower and stabilize fuel prices, thus contributing to price stability in the economy. Moreover, fuel subsidies support various industries by keeping input costs, particularly transportation, relatively lower, which sustains economic activities (NES Group, 2023). Market distortions and inefficiencies arise from the deviation of prices from market clearing prices, which can lead to shortages and disruptions in the supply chain. As Nigeria grapples with the economic implications of subsidy removal, policymakers need to adopt a comprehensive approach that considers not only short-term inflationary effects but also broader economic dynamics and potential mitigative measures.

Interestingly, the removal of fuel subsidies impacts food prices primarily through increased transportation costs. Subsidies lower fuel costs, reducing transportation expenses for goods. Without them, fuel prices rise, increasing transportation costs for farmers and distributors, which leads to higher food prices (NBS, 2024). A report by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024) noted that food prices, including grains, vegetables, and meat, surged significantly due to increased fuel costs. Food inflation spiked by 30% within six months of subsidy removal. Edo, Kogi, and Cross River were identified as States with the highest food prices in June 2024. The food sector is likely to experience a surge in prices due to increased transportation and production costs. This could lead to higher food prices, which disproportionately affect low-income households that spend a larger proportion of their income on food. The resulting inflation could heighten food insecurity and reduce access to nutritious food for many Nigerians, thereby impacting their overall well-being and quality of life (Brown and Nguyen, 2023). According to the NBS (2024), the Consumer Price Index (CPI) surged by 15.3% in the month following the subsidy removal, highlighting a major increase in consumer inflation and reduced purchasing power (NBS, 2024). Lower-income households, which spend a larger share of their income on food, have been disproportionately impacted, leading to reduced consumption and economic. Despite these

immediate challenges, the long-term outlook could be more positive. The subsidy removal may lead to economic stabilization by reducing fiscal deficits and improving resource allocation. However, the transition period requires government action to alleviate adverse effects on vulnerable populations (United Nations Development Programme, 2024).

Impacts of Subsidy Removal on Healthcare Accessibility

The provision of healthcare services in Nigeria is a mix of public and private efforts, with private health facilities playing a significant role in urban centers. Over the years, the Nigerian government has implemented various subsidy regimes to ease the financial burden on citizens and businesses, especially in essential sectors like fuel and energy. On May 29th, 2023, fuel subsidy was eventually removed by President Ahmed Bola Tinubu in his inaugural speech leading to a sharp increase in fuel prices across the country (Ikenga, and Oluka, 2023). This policy change has triggered significant socio-economic consequences, including increased transportation costs, higher prices for goods and services, and a reduction in the purchasing power of households. (Akinola and Uche, 2023). Subsidies, particularly on petroleum products, have long served as an indirect support mechanism for healthcare providers by reducing operational costs associated with electricity generation, transportation, and supply chain logistics (Nwachukwu *et al.* 2022). With the removal of these subsidies, private health facilities are now facing increased costs of operation, which may directly impact their ability to provide affordable and accessible care to patients. For instance, power generation, which is largely dependent on diesel and petrol, has become significantly more expensive, thereby affecting service delivery and pricing in many clinics and hospitals (Okonjo- Iweala, 2023).

Uyo Metropolis, like many urban centers in Nigeria, is heavily reliant on private health facilities due to inadequate public health infrastructure. These facilities cater to a significant portion of the population, particularly in middle and high-income brackets. However, the rising cost of medical supplies, transportation, and utilities could threaten the sustainability of these services (Eze and Akpan, 2023). Furthermore, the economic burden may be transferred to patients through increased service charges, which could reduce healthcare accessibility, especially among low-income earners. In accessing healthcare services, therefore, money is very important. However, with the withdrawal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria recently, the cost implication for accessing healthcare services would be very grave for a number of people as this fuel subsidy spells higher cost of production of drugs and even higher fare to and from healthcare centres and hospitals. Even the healthcare personnel who are also affected by the impact of fuel subsidy removal in many ways would also demand higher fee for treatment. Majority of people cannot afford health centre services as it is today. The economic crisis facing Nigeria as a result of fuel subsidy removal continues to deteriorate and prevent many households from gaining access to basic healthcare since the salaries of workers are not upgraded; they find it difficult to provide food for their immediate families and also take care of health issues (Nolan, 2014). This situation may reduce the family's demand for healthcare, and thus introduce adverse implications on health care spending. The access to healthcare system would be seriously hampered as a result of the withdrawal of fuel subsidy which has introduced a lot hard time for the average Nigerians. Omotayo (2023) is right when he observed that, the access to healthcare system has drastically reduced due to the high rate of poverty and deprivation in Nigeria. Eko (2017) also shared Omotayo's (2023) view, when he noted that, the Nigerian health sector is still striving to provide basic healthcare services with the collaborative

efforts of the three tiers of government, but efforts to achieve this seem impracticable due to the current state of the economy.

Impacts of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Affordability of Shelter

It would be necessary for us to understand what is meant by "affordable house" for a proper grasp of the discussion that follows. Affordable housing is any housing that a household can pay for, while still having money left over for other necessities like food, transportation and healthcare. Put differently, affordable housing refers to housing units that are affordable by that sector of society whose income is below the median household income. This is, to say, that affordable housing is housing which is deemed affordable to those with a household income at or below the median as rated by the national government. Of course, the median household income is the number in the middle when the incomes of every household from the poorest to the richest are listed according to Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (FMHUD). From the foregoing explanations, it is apparent that "affordable housing" is meant for a household of income earners and also, it is accommodation that is for not-so-rich and not-so- poor families or those slightly below the middle or median position. This means an average income earning family could afford or access this type of housing without much hassles or financial inconveniences. Now the question is: How has the removal of fuel subsidy affected the access of the not-so- rich income earners to affordable housing? With the increasing costs in every aspect of the economy as a result of the withdrawal of fuel subsidy there are indications that times are really hard for income earners. Bond (2014) observed that a growing number of low-income tenants are leaving the city centres in Nigeria for the suburbs as house rent and inflation continue to surge, adding to the pain of rising cost of living in the country due to fuel subsidy removal. This, of course, should be expected as the prices of construction supplies including cement, steel, and other building materials are increasing as a result of the elimination of fuel subsidies. Real estate development projects have become more expensive as a result of this cost increase. It is difficult for developers and builders to strike a balance between expenses and profit margins, which naturally has caused development projects to be delayed or housing prices to rise. A rise in home prices could result from higher building costs and rising living expenses.

In fact, the issue has become complicated as prospective homeowners find it more difficult to afford homes due to the price increase, especially those in the middle- and lower-income brackets. In most cities, especially those of Lagos, Abuja and Kaduna, some locations that were affordable in terms of rent are no longer so as they have gone out of the reach of low-income renters due to the removal of fuel subsidy. This situation has made the number of renters or tenants to swell without any restraints. Also, property conversion has added to the night-mare of tenants and prospective tenants. As landlords have embarked on changing many houses from residential to commercial houses for companies, this has reduced the supply of residential accommodation for individual tenants. Moreover, the high cost of building materials which has limited the ability of developers to put more property on the market has combined to make situations for tenants more excruciating. Thus, these conditions, combined with the ever-rising inflationary trend are forcing landlords to increase their rents so that they could pay their bills, maintain their houses and respond to the rising cost of living generally. Over the years, it is known that rents normally rise as a result of limited supply and high demand for both residential and commercial property, but recently, high inflation that came in the wake of the withdrawal of the fuel subsidy, has contributed to a poor economy, unfriendly economic policy and inadequate employment, and these equally

have resulted in reduced productivity and erosion of earning power of many Nigerians. As a matter of fact, according to the latest figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024), the Bureau observed among other things that:

> The yearly inflation rate in Nigeria accelerated to 21.91 per cent in February from 21.82 per cent in January. House rent, soaring food prices and weaker currency were some of the main drivers of the further rise in inflation rate. This is so because the cities are centres for higher cost of living, higher property taxes, increase in cost of building materials and utility costs. In this instance, landlords are finding it difficult to offer affordable rents, more so when the costs of building materials such as cement, roofing sheets, sticks and paints, have risen by over 150 per cent in recent years.

Apart from the above situation, more and more dire conditions have contributed to make access to affordable housing difficult for people. The recession experience in Nigeria which has continued to take its toll on the country has cause the nation to witness a massive crash in the price of stocks and shares in the stock exchange market. Of course, the real estate sector is not exempt from this economic situation. It is common knowledge that one of the most notable hallmarks of a recession is the scarcity of funds. This scarcity of funds is further complicated by the fluctuation in the value of the Naira against the Dollar/Pounds. Then, as a fall-out from this fluctuation, a lot of people find it very difficult to afford or access affordable housing at this time. The effect of fuel subsidy removal has resulted in numerous challenges; with one of the most pressing needs is the need for affordable housing in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

A study by Idisi, Musa, Madueke, Isa, Idiege, Emmanuel, Ogunfinde, and Atteh (2024) assessed how the removal of fuel subsidies affected households' standard of living in Bwari Area Council, Federal Capital Territory-Abuja, Nigeria. Using multi-stage and random sampling methods, a sample of 80 respondents was chosen from eight communities. The data was analyzed using Garrett ranking, multiple regression, and descriptive statistics. According to the regression analysis, household size was significant at the 10% level, while age, monthly income, and primary livelihood were significant at the 1% level. The coefficient of determination (R2) shows that the independent variables account for 64% of the effect of the variables on households' income (the dependent variable) on the government's removal of fuel subsidies. Noah, Jubril, and Bello (2024) investigated the effect of fuel subsidy removal on Nigeria's supply chain, focusing on fuel prices, transportation costs, and food prices. The Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.93$, $p < 0.0001$) between petrol prices and food prices. Regression analysis showed that petrol prices significantly impact transportation costs ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.0001$), suggesting that rising fuel prices lead to higher transportation costs that could be passed on to consumers. Co-integration analysis provided evidence of a long-term equilibrium relationship between petrol prices, transportation costs, and food prices.

The study of Adepoju, Balogun and Bekesuomowei (2023) titled impact of fuel subsidy removal on gross domestic product and transportation cost in Nigeria. The study identified economic problem arising from transportation cost due to removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria. Secondary data were collected from Statista, World Bank web link and prices of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) from 2011-2023. Data on the three variables i.e GDP, the price of PMS and inflation rate were correlated to determine their level of relationships. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse the secondary data with the

aid of SPSS software. The result from the analysis indicated that, inflation increased by 64% with increased fuel price decreasing GDP by 42.5%. Inflation is witness sed to have increased and GDP decreases. It can be seen that fuel is very critical to the development of Nigeria. It has a direct effect on GDP and surprisingly price inflation has impact on Nigerians. Solving one problem perhaps of fuel has a significant effect on economy. The study recommended that two things that should be done as alternatives to subsidy removal; the first is to make the supply of fuel more than the demand. The second option is to find alternative fuel like other countries because the demand for crude oil as major revenue may dwindle over time if the buyers who are planning vigorously on alternative fuel are able to do away with our crude oil. The use of electric vehicle, solar powered vehicles, hybrid vehicles and policy that will encourage non-motorized transport can assist Nigeria to forestall future challenges of global oil demand.

In the same vein, Ikenga and Oluka (2023) examined the benefits and challenges of the fuel subsidy removal on Nigeria's economy during the Fourth Republic. The study employed descriptive analysis and a qualitative data collection method. The study submitted that the previous attempts at reversing fuel subsidy brought untold hardship on the citizens due to increased price of petroleum products, food and transportation. Consequently, the study urged that the federal government to pay a closer attention to the impact fuel subsidy removal has on the citizens while providing palliatives, improved electricity supply and other essential amenities to curb the effects. Onuoha (2023) conducted a study investigating the discourse surrounding the removal of fuel subsidies and its impacts on the Nigerian economy. The research revealed a surge in transportation costs, a steep increase in food prices, and a corresponding upswing in the prices of other essential commodities. The study also observed stagnation in financial situations for certain households lacking a substantial source of income, contributing to a decline in overall income and exacerbating poverty levels within the nation. The study however recommended that government should put in place measures such as the provision of food palliatives especially to low income earners and rural areas where the issue of fuel subsidy removal is biting more, and government should also increase her social investment programs such as the N-Power and school feeding programmes etc.

Nwachukwu and Tumba (2023) conducted a study on the ripple effects of petroleum subsidy removal on consumer buying behaviour in Nigeria. Findings from their study revealed that subsidy removal resulted in an abrupt increase in fuel price, which cascaded into higher costs of transportation and essential goods and services, thereby leading to poor consumer behaviour such as panic buying and hoarding. Hence, they recommended that in order to mitigate the harsh effect of subsidy removal, government should implement a portfolio approach to compensate the poor, including measures such as transport vouchers, mass transit schemes, and e-wallets for small scale businesses. Obiora and Ozillis (2023) analysis of the macroeconomic and microeconomic implications of the 2023 fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria, employing the discourse analysis methodology, provided valuable insights into the potential consequences of this policy shift. They highlighted several positive outcomes, including the freeing up of financial resources for other sectors, incentivizing domestic refineries, reducing dependence on. Imported fuel, boosting employment, and addressing critical public infrastructure needs. However, their study also acknowledges the negative implications, such as potential short-term economic growth reduction, increased inflation, poverty levels, fuel smuggling, and job losses in the informal sector. While the study offers a comprehensive overview of these aspects and provides policy

recommendations, it is important to note some limitations. One significant drawback is the absence of empirical data to substantiate the claims regarding the impact 'of fuel subsidy removal. Additionally, the study does not delve into the potential challenges of implementing these policies, the complexities of subsidy removal in practice, or the Political and social implications in detail. A more robust analysis that incorporates empirical evidence and a deeper exploration of the practical challenges would enhance the study's credibility and utility for policymakers.

In a similar vein, Omotosho (2019) conducted an in-depth analysis of the macroeconomics implications of oil price shocks and the fuel subsidy regime in Nigeria. The study utilised a New-Keynesian DSGE model to estimate the effects of international oil price fluctuations on the retail price of fuel. The findings revealed that oil price shocks significantly impacted Nigeria's economic output, accounting for around 22 percent of output variations over a four-year period. In the benchmark model, which included fuel subsidies, a negative oil price shock led to a contraction in aggregate GDP, stimulated non-oil GDP, increased headline inflation, and depreciated the exchange rate.

Theoretical framework

This study is rooted in the framework of Structural Functionalism, a sociological perspective that traces its origins back to early scholars such as Herbert Spencer 1820-1903), and Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) and Robert Merton (1910-2003). Central to functionalism, often referred to as structural functionalism, is the concept of the "organismic analogy," which envisions society as a cohesive whole. The primary focus of this sociological approach is on the overarching social structures and institutions within society, examining their interconnectedness and the impact they exert on individuals. Durkheim, a prominent figure in the development of functionalism, articulated several key assumptions for understanding society. In Nigeria, various structures (Ministries, Institutions etc.) have been established with the responsibility of delivering services to the citizens. While some structures are multifaceted, some are particularly tailored for specific functions. Notably, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and the Ministry of Petroleum, often overseen by the President, have as their duty to formulate and implement policies that govern the country's oil and gas industry. In other to make fuel affordable to the citizens, fuel subsidy was introduced as a mechanism to support economic stability by making fuel affordable, thus reducing transportation and production costs. However, its removal by the president (Minister of Petroleum), without putting in place adequate measures to curb its effects disrupts this balance, hence increasing the cost of living, reducing disposable income, and straining other sectors and institutions alike.

Methodology

The design adopted for the study was descriptive research and survey. The study utilised both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was gathered through the use of a structured questionnaire. Adult residents living in Uyo LGA within the age bracket of 18-55 and above (413,318) made up the population of study (NBS 2020). A sample size of 382 (three hundred and eighty-two) was drawn from the population using Krejcie and Morgan's table of sample determination. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to divide the population into four strata (civil servants, business men/women, artisans and students) and simple random sampling technique was employed to pick 150 (one hundred and fifty) respondents each from the stratum consisting of civil servants and business men/women while 52 (fifty-two) and 30 (thirty) respondents were chosen from the stratum consisting of

students and artisans respectively. Descriptive statistics such as simple percentages, frequency counts, and Chi-square statistical tool were employed as methods for data analysis. However, out of the 382 (three hundred and eighty-two) copies of questionnaire sent out, only 370 (three hundred and seventy) copies were retrieved and used for the analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Demographic and Socioeconomic Information of the Respondents, N=370

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	258	69.7%
	Female	112	30.3%
Age	18-24	22	5.9%
	25-34	73	19.7%
	35-44	196	53.0%
	45-54	55	14.9%
	55 and above	24	6.5%
Marital Status	Married	211	57.0%
	Single	113	30.5%
	Widowed	31	8.4%
	No response	15	4.1%
Educational	Informal	24	6.5%
Attainment	Primary	69	18.6%
	Secondary	90	24.3%
	Tertiary	187	50.5%
Occupation	Civil servant	150	40.5%
	Business man/ woman	150	40.5%
	Artisan	18	4.9%
	Student	52	14.1%
Level of Income	20,0000	5	1.4%
	20,001-50,000	22	5.9%
	50,001-100,000	188	50.8%
	100,001-200,000	97	26.2%
	200,001-300,000	38	10.3%
	300,001-400,000	15	4.1%
	400,001-500,000	10	2.7%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics. The result was presented in Table 1 above and discussed according to the research objectives. From the table, gender distribution shows that 69.7% of the respondents were male and 30.3% were female. The age range of the respondents between 18-24, 25–34, 35-44 and 45-54 are 5.9%, 19.7%, 53.0% and 14.9% respectively. Only about 6.5% were 55 years and above. This implies that a total of 93.5% of the respondents are in active age and engage in various activities that involve the use of fuel in the study area. Classification of marital status from the distribution of the respondents revealed that 57.0% are married, 30.5%,

8.4% are widows while there was no response from 4.1% of the respondents with regards to marital status. It can be seen that most of the respondents are married. The marital status of a person is expected to determine the extent of responsibility of that person and the manner in which he or she will allocate scarce resources at his or her disposal. This implies that majority of the respondents may require high quantity of fuel, hence the effect of subsidy removal on the goods and service demanded for daily sustenance. The marital status indicates the weight of responsibility, the extent of commitment to his or her job as well as the quantity of fuel he or she is likely to use at a point in time. Single individuals are more likely to demand less of the fuel energy due to the small size of their dwelling compared to those who are married with dependents to take care of.

The distribution of the respondents according to educational background showed that 50.5% and 24.3% had tertiary and secondary qualifications respectively, while only 6.5% had informal education. Implicatively, most of them are literate with majority having tertiary educational qualification. Respondents that possess high educational qualifications are more likely to feel less impact of subsidy removal owing to higher income earned as well as high propensity in optimum utilisation of resources at their disposal. The distribution of the respondents by occupation revealed that 40.5% were civil servants, 40.5% have their own businesses, 14.1% are students while 4.9% are artisans. This implies that the civil servants, with a fixed income level, stand higher chances of being affected by subsidy removal than the rest of the respondents due to their inability to increase income monthly.

As for the business men/women, they could effect increase in price of inputs emanating from subsidy removal on to the consumers so as to offset the differences thereby maintaining a desired income level. Income distribution of the respondents from Table 1 above revealed that about 50.6% of the respondents earn more than ₦100,000, while 1.4% earn below ₦20,000 per month. According to economic theory, the level of consumption of an individual depends largely on his level of current income as propounded by Keynes, the absolute income hypothesis; it states that, “the current real income is the most important determinant of consumption in the short run”. In other words, the higher the individual’s level of income, the higher will be his consumption level. Keynes used the parameter marginal propensity to consume in explaining this. Thus, respondents who fall within the income level between ₦80,000 to ₦100,000 (39.1%) will be less affected compared to those in other groups. This implies that 23.3% of the respondents (with monthly income of less than ₦20,000- ₦60,000) were the most affected owing to high cost of goods and services brought about by subsidy removal.

Table 2: Fuel Subsidy Removal and the Well-being of People in Uyo LGA

	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Government has removed fuel subsidy in Nigeria.	370 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
2.	Fuel subsidy removal has increased overall cost of living.	135 36.5%	159 42.9%	12 3.2%	54 14.6%	10 2.7%
3.	The changes in fuel price has increased my financial stress.	120 32.4%	170 45.9%	10 2.7%	52 14.1%	18 4.9%
4.	The fuel subsidy policy has led to increase in the cost of goods and services in my area.	141 38.1%	190 51.4%	8 2.1%	27 7.3%	4 1.1%
5.	Fuel subsidy removal has affected my ability to afford food.	80 21.6%	138 37.3%	15 4.1%	110 29.7%	27 7.3%
6.	My ability to save money has declined since the removal of fuel subsidy.	108 29.9%	157 42.4%	2 0.5%	70 18.9%	33 8.9%
7.	I can barely afford my house rent due to increase in rent resulting from fuel subsidy removal.	85 22.9%	120 32.4%	6 1.6%	82 22.2%	77 20.8%
8.	Fuel subsidy removal has affected my means of livelihood adversely.	80 21.6%	102 27.6%	58 15.7%	70 18.9%	60 16.2%
9.	My access to healthcare has reduced due to high cost of medical services arising from subsidy removal.	60 16.2%	148 41 .0%	21 5.7%	80 21.6%	61 16.5%
10.	My overall standard of living has declined due to fuel price changes resulting from fuel subsidy removal.	136 36.8%	138 37.3%	5 1.4%	76 20.5%	14 3.8%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows the impact of fuel subsidy rem oval on the well-being of people in the study area. The results from the survey revealed that 100% being the total of all the respondents strongly agreed that fuel subsidy has been removed. This means that all the respondents are aware and up to date on fuel subsidy policies. 36.5% 42.9% of the respondents strongly agree and agree that the overall cost of living has increased due t subsidy removal, 14.1% and 2.7% disagree and strongly disagree respectively while 3.2% remained neutral in their response. Also, 32.4% strongly agree that the change in fuel price caused by subsidy removal has increased their financial stress, 45.9% agree to the statement while 14.1% and 4.9% disagree and strongly disagree respectively, 2.7% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. With regards to statement 4, 38.1% of the respondents strongly agree that the cost of goods and services in Uyo metropolis has increased as a result of government's removal of fuel subsidy. 51.4% agreed, 2.1% were neutral in their response while 7.3% and 1.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed. 21.6% and 37.3% strongly agreed and agreed that their ability to afford food has declined since the removal of subsidy, 29.7% disagreed, 7.3% strongly agreed while 4.1% remained neutral in their response.

Furthermore, 42.4% and 29.9% agreed and strongly agreed that their ability to save money has declined since fuel subsidy was removed. 18.9% disagreed to the statement, 8.9% strongly disagreed and 0.5% neither agreed nor disagreed. 22.9% and 32.4% strongly agreed and agreed that the can barely afford to pay their house rent due to increase in rent occasioned by fuel subsidy removal.22.2% and 20.8% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, 1.6% of the respondents gave a neutral response. On the statement about subsidy removal having an adverse effect on people's livelihood, 21.6% strongly agreed, 27.6% agreed, 15.7% were neutral in their response while 18.9% and 16.2% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.16.2% strongly agreed to decreased access to essential services such as healthcare due to the rising cost of medical services as a result of subsidy removal. 40.0% agreed, 21.6% disagreed and 16.5% strongly disagreed, 5.7% remained neutral.

36.8% and 37.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that their overall standard of living has declined to fuel price changes resulting from subsidy removal. 20.5% and 3.8% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, while 1.4% remained neutral. 54.1% and 15.4% disagreed and strongly disagreed that provides sufficient financial relief to lessen the effect of fuel subsidy removal. 23.0% agreed, 7.0% strongly agreed and 0.5% remained neutral.

Table 3: Results of the observed and expected frequencies on the rrelationship between subsidy removal and the ability of people to afford food, shelter as well as accessibility of critical services, such as healthcare in Uyo local government area following fuel subsidy removal.

STATEMENTS	SA	A	N	D	SD	TOTAL
S5	80	138	15	110	27	370
S7	85	120	6	82	77	370
S9	60	148	21	80	61	370
TOTAL	225	406	42	272	165	1110

Source: Field Survey 2024

To calculate the expected frequency for each cell is to multiply the row total by the column. Total for the cell and divide product by the grand total.

Expected frequency = $\frac{\text{Row total X Column total}}{\text{Grand total}}$

S5 ⇒ SA = $\frac{370 \times 225}{1110} = 75$

A = $\frac{370 \times 406}{1110} = 135.33$

N = $\frac{370 \times 42}{1110} = 14$

D = $\frac{370 \times 272}{1110} = 90.67$

SD = $\frac{370 \times 165}{1110} = 55$

S7 ⇒ SA = $\frac{370 \times 225}{1110} = 75$

A = $\frac{370 \times 406}{1110} = 135.33$

N = $\frac{370 \times 42}{}$

1110 = 14

D = 370 X 272 / 1110 = 90.67

SD = 370 X 165 / 1110 = 55

S9 ⇒ SA = 370 X 225 / 1110 = 75

A = 370 X 4 / 1110 = 5

Table 4: Contingency Table

R–C	Fo	Fe	fo–fe	$(fo–fe)^2$	$\frac{(fo–fe)^2}{fe}$
1–1	80	75	5	25	0.333
1–2	138	135.33	2.67	7.1289	0.053
1–3	15	14	1	1	0.071
2–1	110	90.6	19.4	376.36	4.154
2–2	27	55	–28	784	14.255
2–3	85	75	10	100	1.333
3–1	120	135.33	–15.33	235.0089	1.737
3–2	6	14	–8	64	4.571
3–3	82	90.6	–8.6	73.96	0.816
4–1	77	55	22	484	8.8
4–2	60	75	–15	225	3
4–3	148	135.33	12.6	160.5289	1.186
5–1	21	14	7	49	3.5
5–2	80	90.6	–10.6	112.36	1.240
5–3	61	55	6	36	0.655
Total					45.704

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo–fe)}{fe}$$

hence, the calculated $X^2 = 45.704$

DF= (R-1) (C-1)

(5-1) (3-1)

4 X 2 = 8

X^2 = 45.704 > 15.507

Decision: Since the calculated Chi-square value of 45.704 is greater than the Chi-square table value of 15.507 at 0.05% level of significance, we therefore reject the null hypotheses (H_0) and accept the alternative hypotheses and conclude that Subsidy Removal has affected people's ability to afford food, house rent (shelter) as well as their accessibility to essential service like healthcare in Uyo local government. In essence, fuel subsidy removal has direct impact on the welfare of people living in Uyo Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

From the study, it is revealed that basically everyone from the study is aware that fuel subsidies have been removed and 42.9% of the respondents affirmed that because of this (subsidy removal), the overall cost of living has increased. Similarly, 51.4% of the respondents agreed that prices of goods and services have also increased due to fuel subsidy removal. Subsidy removal led to a sharp increase in petrol prices and also since fuel is essential for transportation and power generation, the price increase had a ripple effect on the economy as well as the well-being of the people as revealed in the studies conducted by

Omotosho (2019), Ikenga and Oluka (2023). Findings from the study also revealed that 45.9% of the respondents agreed that the changes in fuel price has increased their financial stress, this is inevitable because as earlier mentioned fuel is an essential commodity for everyone, whether you are a business man/woman, a civil servant or even a student. A change in the price of fuel affects basically every aspect of one's daily life; from transportation to buying goods and services etc.

Also, the study revealed that fuel subsidy removal affected the volume of savings of respondents. About 42.4% of the respondents affirmed that their savings decreased as fuel subsidy was removed. This indicates that subsidy removal has been an additional liability to respondents in terms of reduction in the level of their savings. This could be as a result of shock that emanated from subsidy removal that has direct connection with income and savings. Saving as one of the household's or individual's well-being components has been negatively affected as most of the respondents have experienced reduction in their savings caused by a fall in the disposable income. Furthermore, the study disclosed that 27.6%% of the respondents agreed that the removal of fuel subsidy has an adverse effect on the means of livelihood (occupation) while 15.7% were undecided. The survey therefore, indicates that removing subsidy on fuel had triggered a decline in prospect of individual's occupations due to increased cost. Many people experienced decline in their day to day activities ranging from reduction in hour of work per day, and reduction in income as a result of low customer turnover (in the case of business men/women). The reduction in hours of work experienced by some individuals coupled with linkage and spillover effects associated with some type of occupation has caused some people to move from one form of job to another that might not necessarily be suitable for their skills.

Conclusion

The removal of fuel subsidies has significant and far-reaching effects on people's welfare, impacting economic stability, cost of living, and overall quality of life. While it can improve government finances by reducing fiscal burdens and encouraging investment in critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, it also raises fuel and transportation costs, leading to inflation in goods and services. This disproportionately affects lower-income households, increasing financial strain and reducing access to essential commodities. To mitigate these challenges, government must implement targeted social welfare programs, invest in alternative energy sources, and promote policies that cushion the most vulnerable groups.

Recommendations

i. Government should adopt good food security measures such as subsidised agricultural inputs, to provide farmers with subsidies on seeds, fertilizers, and equipment to reduce production cost; strengthen local food production by investing in local farming and agricultural business to reduce dependence on expensive imported food; implement price control mechanism or targeted food subsidies for vulnerable populations; and improve transportation and storage infrastructure to minimise food wastage and ensure affordability.
ii. Government should aim at providing affordable housing and shelter by introducing regulations to prevent excessive rent increases caused by rising building material costs; provide low-income housing schemes with flexible payment options or government backed financing; and promote the use of alternative energy sources to reduce dependency costly fossils fuel.

iii. Accessible healthcare should be the concern of the government. This can be achieved by expanding healthcare coverage by offering subsidized insurance plans for low-income groups; increasing investment in public healthcare to make services more affordable and reduce out-of- pocket expenses; supporting pharmaceutical companies to produce affordable generic medicines locally; and expanding access to healthcare services to remote areas through mobile health units' digital healthcare solutions.

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