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Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Staff Welfare and Students Academic Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Delta State

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Abstract: This paper examined the impact of fuel subsidy removal on staff welfare and students' academic performance in tertiary institutions with a view of looking at the measures put in place by the government in ensuring that the people are not affected by the subsidy removal. Four research questions were posed for the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all staff (teaching and non-teaching) of all government owned tertiary institutions in Delta State. The sample of the study consisted 120 staff drawn from three selected tertiary institutions in Delta State. A structured questionnaire of 30-item on four-point Likert scale was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined by using Cronbach Alpha reliability method and the reliability coefficient was 0,82. The data collected was analyzed using statistics of mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that fuel subsidy removal affected staff and students' welfare and student' academic performance in tertiary institutions. The findings of the study further revealed that the extent to which government intervention on fuel subsidy removal can mitigate the sufferings of staff and students in tertiary institutions. The ways of alleviating the constraints experienced by staff and students were also identified. Based on the findings it was recommended that government should introduce children school fees allowance in worker's salary in tertiary institutions for ease of payment of school fees, government should subsidized the high cost of learning materials for tertiary institution students to help improve students' academic performance, government should introduce free transportation system for staff and students in tertiary institutions to reduce the suffering of high cost of transportation among others.

Keywords: fuel subsidy, fuel subsidy removal, staff welfare academic performance, tertiary institutions

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a priority sector for every well- meaning society. It is not just mere legacy but a key to self-reliance, independence and freedom, which sharpens individuals, communities, and societies. Hence, Aregbesola, (2023) described it as a pivotal instrument for social, political, and economic development. Education transcends academic excellence; it entails personal growth and character development which can be achieved in tertiary institutions. According to Olubanji and Akinwande (2019), tertiary institutions are institutions which offer higher and innovative forms of education in the nation's universities, colleges of education; polytechnics; and monotechnics who offer undergraduate and post-graduate programmes and award academic degrees or professional certificates. Tertiary institutions thereby prepare students for the workforce and help them to develop critical thinking skills to become useful members of the society. Thus, the policies put in place by Government goes a long way in affecting the educational system. The removal of fuel subsidy has brought untold hardship to students and staff of various tertiary institutions.

One can describe the removal of subsidy by the government on petroleum products as a decision that has far reaching consequences on the educational system and the general society at large. The importance of fuel cannot be overemphasized. Virtually everything we do requires fuel from the movement of people from one place to another to the transportation of goods and services. The government put subsidy on fuel as a policy aimed at making it available and accessible to the poor in the society. 1970 marked the beginning of fuel subsidy and this followed the promulgation of the 1977 price control act which it unlawful for products such as petrol to sell above the regulated price. Despite the noble concept behind subsidy, corruption and mismanagement has allegedly characterized the different administration in Nigeria. However, the biggest challenge posed to the country's economy is the subsidy on petroleum motor spirits PMS. The price of petrol has a significant influence on the cost of living in Nigeria because it is majorly used by small scale business enterprises and many families to run their power supply due to irregular supply of electricity. (Adeoti, et. al., 2016). The government of any country provides financial assistance in form of subsidy to mitigate desirable activities to reduce prices, support the income of producers of important products, regulate employment at all levels and make investments to reduce unemployment (Mohammed, Ahmed & Adedeji, 2020).

Fuel subsidy could be described as the absolute value of the actual market price of petroleum products per litre and what the final consumers are paying for the same product. According to Nwachukwu and Tumba (2023), described fuel subsidy as a means of government intervention aimed at decreasing the cost of fuel by offering direct financial assistance to oil companies. It is the instrument used in cushioning the effects of price fluctuations and maintaining stability in the transportation sector which have played a crucial role in supporting economy and improving the

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welfare of the Nigerian population (Popoola, 2020). Fuel subsidies are usually imposed when a government sets the petrol price below the market or international price to make the product accessible and affordable to the consumers. Therefore, fuel subsidy means to sell premium motor spirit (also called petrol) below the cost of production. In all, Nigerians have viewed fuel subsidies as one of the few benefits they receive from oil, the endowed resources of Nigeria, particularly given the absence of a constant and stable electricity supply in the country as well as indeterminate and inherent volatile fuel price in the internal market which fluctuates every time (Eyiuche, 2012). Research in Delta State has established that staff unions play a crucial role in improving workers' wages and employment conditions in tertiary institutions (Ubah & Nkedishu, 2021). This perspective becomes particularly relevant as academic staff grapple with increased transportation costs and diminished purchasing power following the removal of fuel subsidies.

Based on the fact that many persons have been clamoring for subsidy removal due to market misrepresentation. The government of President Ahmed Bola Tinubu led administration announced the fuel subsidy removal on May 29th 2023. This means that the government will no longer provide financial assistance to reduce fuel price for consumers (Soremekun, 2023). The idea of removing fuel subsidy is usually to make the government spend less and promote more judicious use of resources. When subsidy is removed, it often leads to a hike in price of petrol. Thus consumers pay higher for fuel. According to experts fuel subsidy removal helps to free up resources for other sectors of the economy like healthcare, education and development of other sectors and the establishment of local refineries for the production of petroleum products. According to McCulloh, Moreenhout and Yang (2019). Removing subsidies without improving social welfare protection may be considered unilateral change in the social contract, which can result to protest and political instability.

For many years, the Nigerian economy has been heavily reliant on the supply of low-cost petroleum products. As noted by Mohammed, Ahmed, and Adedeji (2020), a typical Nigerian household heavily relies on subsidized petroleum byproducts like petrol and kerosene for both domestic and commercial needs. This dependence is further exacerbated by the unreliable electricity supply from public power distributors. Consequently, generators powered by subsidized fuel have become a mainstay for most homes and businesses. This reliance extends to individuals like students and lecturers who heavily depend on fuel for their transportation needs. The recent removal of fuel subsidies has significantly impacted the country's inflation rate, currently exceeding 25%. The cost of transportation has already surged due to the ripple effect across various sectors, particularly those reliant on transportation. This has resulted in a sharp increase in the prices of goods and services, making them unaffordable for many. The removal of fuel subsidies has had a detrimental impact on all institutions within the country by significantly increasing the cost of goods and services. The sudden surge in fuel prices following the removal of subsidies has further exacerbated the economic hardships faced by the Nigerian populace" (Imam, 2023).

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The removal of fuel subsidy has influenced staff welfare in higher institutions Stone (2012) sees staff welfare as part of management which is concerned with the physical and mental being of employees. Mekuri-Ndimele and Ukata (2024) noted that teachers' and non-teachers' salaries were not adequate and that they are the least paid (remunerated) workers in the Nigerian economy and they have become notorious for poverty. Removal of fuel subsidy brings untold hardship to the teaching and non-teaching staff in tertiary institutions. The minimum wage of workers is nothing to write home about considering rising costs of food items and transportation. We must also not lose sight of the increase in school fees in the institution occasioned by the removal of subsidy in petroleum products. Okwa, Okwonu, Owoyi (2024) also noted that workers with fixed salary may find it difficult to cope with the increase of prices of commodities as a result of the high cost of fuel, especially providing adequately for the academic needs of their children.

A lot of the students cannot feed or buy academic learning materials among other hardship because of the high cost of commodities occasioned by removal of fuel subsidy. This has resulted to low students' academic performance especially in tertiary institutions. Ampofo and Osei- Owusu (2015), defined academic performance as the degree to which a student is able to accomplish a given class work setting. Moreover, students' academic performance can be measured through a student's grade, test score and other factors. Ugochukwu and Nwaru (2024) further stated that fuel subsidy removal influenced academic activities in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria as the exorbitant cost of fuel automatically increased the prices of almost everything relating to teaching and learning. This has led to students trekking very long distances before getting to their various schools thus making life unbearable, increased economic hardship and worsening poor living standards has ravaged all.

The government as a role to play in ensuring that these hardship occasioned by the removal of fuel subsidy can be reduced. Hence Kale, Sowande, and Salaudeen (2023), submitted that there is need for the government to intervene in the sufferings of the masses as a result of subsidy removal by increasing the salary of workers and provision of low transport services. According to Ukozor and Ogunode (2023), the removal of subsidies has affected both private and public institutions, in fact it has adversely affected every aspect of the economy. In fact, Ogwuche, Adejor, Dabish,, Garba and Dole (2024) submitted that effect of the constraints associated with fuel subsidy removal can be cushioned by providing cheap transportation services and use of government buses as means of transportation for the citizenry.. The sufferings occasioned by the removal of fuel subsidy on staff and students in tertiary institutions is alarming. It is against this background that the researchers decided to carry out a study on the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the staff welfare and students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

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Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

Statement of the Problem

One government intervention aimed at lowering fuel costs involves providing direct financial support to oil companies, effectively subsidizing fuel prices for consumers. This intervention plays a crucial role in supporting vital sectors of the economy and infrastructure development. However, despite its benefits, the removal of fuel subsidies has significantly impacted low-income households. Since President Tinubu's administration announced the end of fuel subsidies on May 29, 2023, Nigerians, particularly students and employees, have experienced a sharp increase in transportation costs due to soaring fuel prices. Furthermore, rising inflation has exacerbated household hardships, leading to increased prices for food, rent, and other essential commodities. The removal of fuel subsidies has driven up the prices of goods and services across all sectors of the Nigerian economy. Tertiary institutions in Delta State have been particularly affected, as students and staff, many of whom are low-income earners, face significant financial strain in meeting academic requirements due to the high cost of fuel. This has negatively impacted the efficiency of school administration and student attendance in tertiary institutions across Delta State

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

- 1. What ways has fuel subsidy removal affected staff and students welfare in tertiary institutions in Delta State?
- 2. What ways has fuel subsidy removal affected students' academic performance in tertiary institutions of Delta State?
- 3. What ways can government intervention on fuel subsidy removal mitigate the sufferings of staff and students in tertiary institutions in Delta State.
- 4. What are the possible solutions to the constraints associated with the removal of fuel subsidy among staff and students in tertiary institutions in Delta State?

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The target population encompassed all teaching and non-teaching staff within all government-owned tertiary institutions in Delta State. A sample of 120 teaching and non-teaching staff was selected from Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Universities in the Delta North senatorial district, including Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, Osadenis University Asaba, and the Federal College of Education (T) Asaba. Data collection was conducted using a 30-item structured questionnaire. The questionnaire utilized a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) - 4, Agree (A) - 3, Disagree (D) - 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1, and Very High Extent (VHE) - 4, High Extent (HE) - 3, Low

Vol.13, Issue 3, 16-27, 2025

Online ISSN: 2054-636X (Online)

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Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

Extent (LE) - 2, Very Low Extent (VLE) - 1. The cut-off point for the scale was calculated as (4+3+2+1)/4 = 2.50. The instrument's validity was established through expert review by two measurement and evaluation specialists. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.82. Data analysis involved calculating mean scores and standard deviations to address the research questions. A decision rule was established: any item with a mean value of 2.50 or higher was considered "agree" or "high extent," while items with a mean value below 2.50 were considered "disagree" or "low extent."

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What ways has fuel subsidy removal affected staff and students welfare of tertiary institutions in Delta State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Staff of Tertiary Institutions on Ways Fuel Subsidy Removal has Affected Staff and Students' Welfare in Tertiary Institutions in Delta State.

S/N	Ways Fuel Subsidy Removal has Affected Staff and Students'	Mean	SD	Remark
	Welfare			
1	Provision of fuel for staff vehicle to work is difficult due to the removal of fuel subsidy	2.94	0.56	Agree
2	The high inflation rate arising from the removal of fuel subsidy has made feeding difficult for staff	3.02	0.80	Agree
3	Payment of house rent by staff is difficult because of inflation arising from fuel subsidy removal	2.78	0.98	Agree
4	Provision of adequate medical services for staff family is tough due to inflation from fuel subsidy removal.	2.83	0.98	Agree
5	Attending conferences and workshops have become difficult due to the rise in costs of fuel due to subsidy removal	3.00	0.82	Agree
6	Fuel subsidy removal has exposed staff to greater insecurity	2.83	0.99	Agree
7	High inflation rate arising from fuel subsidy removal has made payment of children's school fees difficult	2.94	0.87	Agree
-	Grand Mean	2.91	0.85	Agree

The data analysis as presented in Table 1 showed that the mean values of responses on items 1-7 ranges from 2.78 to 3.02 which are above 2.50. This indicated that the respondents all agreed with the items. The grand mean of 2.91 was above the criterion mean of 2.50 which indicated that fuel subsidy removal affected staff and students' welfare in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Research Question 2: What ways has fuel subsidy removal affected students' academic performance in tertiary institutions of Delta State?

Vol.13, Issue 3, 16-27, 2025

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Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Staff of Tertiary Institutions on the ways fuel subsidy removal has affected students' academic performance in tertiary institutions of Delta State?

S/N	Fuel Subsidy Removal and Students' Academic	Mean	SD	Remark
	Performance			
1.	The high cost of feeding due to fuel subsidy has influenced students' academic performance	2.86	1.03	Agree
2.	The high cost of textbooks and writing materials due to fuel subsidy removal has influenced students' academic performance	3.10	0.95	Agree
3.	Fuel subsidy removal has forced students to be absent from class thereby affecting their academic performance	3.00	0.89	Agree
4.	The removal of fuel subsidy has restricted students participation in extracurricular academic activities	3.11	0.81	Agree
5.	The removal of fuel subsidy led to students inability to buy course materials	3.18	0.94	Agree
6.	The removal of fuel subsidy led to students skipping of classes and this can influence students' academic performance	2.90	0.82	Agree
7.	The removal of fuel subsidy has forced students to work long hours thereby reducing study time influenced students' academic performance	2.91	0.95	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.01	0.91	Agree

The data analysis presented in Table 2 showed that the mean values of responses on items 8-14 ranges from 2.86 to 3.18 which are above 2.50. This indicated that the respondents agreed with all the items. The grand mean of 3.01 was above the criterion mean of 2.50 which indicated that fuel subsidy removal has great influence on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Research Question 3: What ways can government intervention on fuel subsidy removal mitigate the sufferings of staff and students in tertiary institutions in Delta State?

Vol.13, Issue 3, 16-27, 2025

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Website: https://www.eajournals.org/

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Staff of Tertiary Institutions on the Extent Government Intervention on Fuel Subsidy Removal Mitigated the Sufferings of Staff and Students in Tertiary Institutions in Delta State.

S/N	Extent Government Intervention on Fuel Subsidy Removal	Mean	SD	Remark
	Mitigated the Sufferings of Staff and Students			
1.	Direct Cash transfers scheme	2.94	0.98	High Extent
2.	Distribution of foodstuff such as rice	2.99	0.86	High Extent
3.	Provision of additional public transport Services	2.76	0.95	High Extent
4.	Wages increase for teaching and non - teaching staff	2.86	1.01	High Extent
5.	Federal government loan of N5bn to each state	2.99	0.81	High Extent
6.	Provision of funds for students loan Scheme	2.77	0.88	High Extent
7.	Transport palliatives through vouchers	2.97	1.06	High Extent
8.	Provision of CNG gas stations in tertiary institutions	3.10	1.00	High Extent
9.	Provision of low cost transport services to work	3.09	0.98	High Extent
	Grand Mean	2.94	0.95	High Extent

The data analysis presented in Table 3 showed that the mean values of responses on items 15-23 ranges from 2.76 to 3.10 which are above 2.50. The high extent of acceptance of the items indicated that the respondents accepted all the items with a grand mean of 2.94 which was above the criterion mean of 2.50 thus the above government intervention on fuel subsidy removal can help to mitigate the sufferings of staff and students in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Research Question 4: What are the possible solutions to the constraints associated with fuel subsidy removal on staff and students in tertiary institutions in Delta State?

Table 4: Mean Ratings of Staff of Tertiary Institutions on the Possible Solutions to the Constraints Associated with Fuel Subsidy Removal on Staff and Students in Tertiary Institutions in Delta State.

S/N	Possible Solutions to the Constraints Associated with Fuel	Mean	SD	Remark
	Subsidy Removal on Staff and Students			
1.	Increasing staff salary and allowances.	2.97	0.76	Agree
2.	Extending student's loan scheme to reach all students.	3.03	0.84	Agree
3.	Making accessible to lecturers research grant	3.11	0.93	Agree
4.	Introducing school feeding programmes for staff and students	3.01	0.87	Agree
	in tertiary institutions.			
5.	Introducing free transportation within grant	2.81	0.90	Agree
6.	Reducing costs of learning materials	3.09	0.90	Agree
7.	Provision and upgrading of infrastructure (Light,	3.06	0.92	Agree
	Communication, roads, etc.) in tertiary institutions.			
	Grand Mean	3.01	0.87	Agree

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Website: https://www.eajournals.org/

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

The data analysis presented in Table 4 showed that the mean values of responses on items 24-30 ranges from 2.81 to 3.11 which are above 2.50. This indicated that the respondents agreed with all the items. The grand mean of 3.01 was above the criterion mean of 2.50 which indicated that all the items are possible solutions to the constraints associated with fuel subsidy removal on staff and students in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are discussed based on the four research questions answered under the following sub-headings:

Ways Fuel Subsidy Removal Affected Staff and Students Welfare in Tertiary Institutions.

The study found that fuel subsidy removal affects staff and students in tertiary institutions in the following ways: provision of fuel for staff vehicle to work, staff feeding, payment of house rent, provision of adequate medical services for staff family, exposure of staff to greater insecurity and payment of fees for children. The findings are in consonance with the submissions of Okwa, Okwonu,Owoyi (2024) that workers with fixed salary may find it difficult to cope with the increase of prices of commodities as a result of the high cost of fuel, especially providing adequately for the academic needs of their children.

Ways Fuel Subsidy Removal has Influenced Students' Academic Performance in Tertiary Institutions.

The study ascertained that fuel subsidy removal influenced students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in the following ways: increase in cost of feeding, high cost of textbooks and writing materials, absent from class work due to hike in transportation cost, restriction of students' participation in extracurricular academic activities, inability to buy course materials, skipping of classes due to lack of transport fare and walking long hours and shorten lecture periods. The findings are in agreement with the submissions of Ugochukwu and Nwaru (2024) which states that fuel subsidy removal influenced academic activities in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria as the exorbitant cost of fuel automatically increased the prices of almost everything relating to teaching and learning.

Government Intervention on Fuel Subsidy Removal and its Mitigation on the Sufferings of Staff and Students in Tertiary Institutions.

The study found that government intervention on fuel subsidy removal mitigated the sufferings of staff and students in tertiary institutions to a high extent in the following ways: direct cash transfers scheme, distribution of food stuff, provision of additional public transport services,

Vol.13, Issue 3, 16-27, 2025

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Website: https://www.eajournals.org/

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

wages increase for teaching and non-teaching, federal government loan of N5bn to each state, provision of funds for students loan scheme, transport palliatives, provision of CNG gas stations in tertiary institutions and provision of low cost transport services to work. The findings are in consonance with the submissions of Kale, Sowande, and Salaudeen (2023) that there is need for the government to intervene in the sufferings of the masses as a result of subsidy removal by increasing the salary of workers and provision of low transport services.

Possible Solutions to the Constraints Associated with Fuel Subsidy Removal on Staff and Students in Tertiary Institutions.

The study found the following as possible solutions to the constraints associated with fuel subsidy removal on staff and students in tertiary institutions: increasing staff salary and allowances, extending students' loan scheme to all students, making research grant assessable to lecturers, introducing school feeding programme for staff and students in tertiary institutions, introducing free transportation within grant, reducing cost of learning materials and provision of Upgrading of infrastructure in tertiary institutions. The findings are in agreement with the submission of Ogwuche, Adejor, Dabish,,Garba and Dole (2024) that effect of the constraints associated with fuel subsidy removal can be cushioned by providing cheap transportation services and use of government buses as means of transportation for the citizenry.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that fuel subsidy removal affected staff and student's welfare and academic performance of students in tertiary institutions. The extent to which government intervention mitigated the sufferings of staff and students in tertiary institutions was high. Increasing staff salary, students' loan scheme, and free transportation among others are the possible solutions to the constraints associated with fuel subsidy removal on staff and students in tertiary institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 1. Government should introduce children school fees allowance in worker's salary in tertiary institutions for ease of payment of school fees.
- 2. Government should introduce school feeding programme for staff and students in tertiary institutions to mitigate on the effect of high cost of feeding orchestrated by the removal of fuel subsidy.
- 3. Government should subsidized the increased cost of learning materials for tertiary institution students to help improve students' academic performance.

Vol.13, Issue 3, 16-27, 2025

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Website: https://www.eajournals.org/

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK

4. Government should introduce free transportation system for staff and students in tertiary institutions to decrease the suffering due to the increase in cost of transportation.

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Vol.13, Issue 3, 16-27, 2025

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