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**THE IMPACT OF ENERGY (FUEL) SUBSIDY REMOVAL ON  
CITIZEN SATISFACTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS  
SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSUMER SATISFACTION IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the impact of fuel subsidy removal on citizen satisfaction in Nigeria. It reviewed literature on the economic consequences of subsidy removal, energy affordability, public perception, and lessons from other countries. The study aimed to assess how subsidy removal affects household finances and living standards, evaluate citizen satisfaction, and compare its impact across socio-economic groups. Using a mixed-method approach (survey and documentary analysis), data were analyzed with mean and standard deviation, with 2.50 set as the positive benchmark. Findings revealed that subsidy removal contributed to economic instability, negatively affected households, and disproportionately burdened low-income groups. The study concluded that while subsidy removal may raise electricity costs and cause short-term hardship, it could also promote a more efficient and sustainable power sector. It recommended, among other measures, that the government increase the minimum wage to help workers cope with higher energy costs and reduce labor resistance.*

**KEYWORDS:** Energy Subsidy; Households; Citizen; Fuel; Economy.

## INTRODUCTION

Petroleum (oil) product has remained the bench mark of Nigeria's education, socio-economic, defense and foreign policies. To anyone remotely acquainted with Nigerian politics, oil resources occupy a prominent place in the nation's power struggle. The struggle for power is a clear struggle to control the oil resources and improve the economy of one's ethnic group through development opportunities. Politics in Nigeria cannot be severed from oil and as such, national and individual dreams, hopes and aspirations of the citizen and government are built around oil (Leonard, 2023).

The decisive policy change of energy subsidy removal carries many implications that warrant rigorous investigation to understand its far-reaching consequences. This study examined the impact of Energy subsidy removal on citizen satisfaction in Nigeria. Energy subsidies have been a contentious economic and political issue in many countries, including Nigeria. For years, Nigeria has implemented energy subsidies as a means to provide cheaper petroleum products to its citizens. Energy subsidies refer to financial assistance provided by the government to reduce the cost of energy production or consumption. These subsidies are usually aimed at making energy more affordable for consumers or encouraging investment in particular energy sources. Citizen satisfaction is crucial for the stability and legitimacy of any government. In the context of energy subsidy removal, citizen satisfaction becomes particularly significant due to its direct impact on people's daily lives and the overall economy. The Federal Government of Nigeria has for the past years informing the citizens of subsidy removal the government particularly points that it aimed at generating additional revenue that will be used to improve more infrastructure in the country such as roads, schools, hospital etc.

However, the government embarked on drastic removal of energy subsidy in June 2023 though, it was claimed to be in the favor of the citizens, whether the removal was good or not, the issue raised was that, the timing was wrong and there was no safety net put in place before its removal

Energy subsidies have long been a contentious policy issue worldwide. Global subsidies for the use of energy were valued at \$325 billion by the International Energy Agency in 2015 and increased to over \$400 billion in 2018 (International Energy Agency, 2019). This is a lot more than the total amount of aid (\$163 billion in 2015). According to McCulloch's (2017) . research, of the 96 countries for which data are available for both energy subsidies and aid,

59% have subsidies greater than the total amount of bilateral aid they receive. Energy subsidies are especially common in Africa and the Middle East; in reality, even in sub-Saharan Africa, the median country has energy subsidies exceeding 1% of GDP (McCulloch and Dom, 2019). In several of these countries, these subsidies are greater than some significant domestic income sources. According to Hoy and Sumner (2016), in 2011 the global poverty gap was 69% of the subsidies. Additionally, this only accounts for the financial cost of subsidies. The IMF estimates that the cost of energy subsidies rises to \$5.3 trillion, or more than 6% of global GDP (Coady et al., 2015) when the cost of negative externalities caused by such subsidies is taken into account. These externalities include air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, traffic, accidents, road damage, and lost tax revenue.

The removal of energy subsidies in Nigeria has significant socioeconomic implications that directly affect the satisfaction levels of its citizens. Energy subsidies refer to government policies that artificially lower the cost of energy products such as gasoline, diesel, and electricity through financial assistance or price controls. While these subsidies are often implemented with the intention of benefiting the population by making energy more affordable, their removal can have both positive and negative impacts on the economy and society as a whole. This places a heavy financial burden on the government, often resulting in significant budget deficits and reduced fiscal space for essential public services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure development. By removing these subsidies, the government can redirect funds towards more productive investments, stimulating economic growth and job creation in the long run. Additionally, the removal of energy subsidies can lead to more efficient allocation of resources in the energy sector, encouraging private investment and innovation in renewable energy technologies. For instance, Akinyemi et al. (2017) conducted a simulation study using a dynamic Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) approach to analyze the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the agricultural sector. Their findings revealed that subsidy removal could have far-reaching effects on various sectors, with repercussions for government revenue and expenditure patterns.

The removal of energy subsidies typically results in an immediate increase in the prices of energy products, leading to higher transportation costs and inflationary pressures across the economy. This can disproportionately impact low-income households that spend a larger proportion of their income on energy-intensive goods and services, such as food and transportation. As a result, the cost of living may rise, potentially eroding the purchasing power of citizens and reducing overall satisfaction with their standard of living.

Energy subsidies often benefit wealthier segments of society more than the poor, as higher-

income households tend to consume more energy. Consequently, the removal of subsidies can contribute to a reduction in income inequality by reallocating government resources towards programs that directly benefit the most vulnerable segments of the population. However, the immediate increase in energy prices may still disproportionately affect low-income households, exacerbating socioeconomic disparities and potentially leading to social unrest and dissatisfaction.

Energy subsidies encourage excessive consumption of fossil fuels, leading to higher carbon emissions and environmental degradation. By removing these subsidies, the government can promote sustainable energy practices and reduce its carbon footprint, contributing to global efforts to mitigate climate change and protect the environment. However, the transition away from fossil fuels may require significant investments in renewable energy infrastructure and workforce retraining, posing challenges in the short term.

In the light of the fore-going, the paper will therefore interrogate the following research questions:

1. How does the removal of energy subsidies affect the cost of energy resources for Nigerian citizens?
2. What is the impact of energy subsidy removal on the accessibility of energy services in different socio-economic groups?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Numerous studies (Adeoti, 2018; Okafor et al., 2020) emphasize the economic consequences of energy subsidy removal. Adeoti's analysis reveals that subsidy removal can lead to increased energy prices, impacting the cost of living for citizens. Such economic shifts have been associated with reduced household purchasing power and heightened inflation rates, contributing to concerns about the overall economic well-being of the population.

The study by Okafor et al. (2020) delves into the consequences for household budgets. The findings suggest that subsidy removal can strain household finances, leading to a decrease in purchasing power. This can have cascading effects on consumption patterns, potentially impacting overall economic growth. A key aspect of subsidy removal is the potential fiscal space it creates for the government (World Bank, 2019). The World Bank's report highlights that redirecting resources from subsidy programs can enhance government expenditure in other critical areas, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This reallocation is seen as a means to stimulate economic development. Hassan and Olanrewaju, (2016), also

emphasize the role of subsidy removal in contributing to macroeconomic stability. He asserted that by reducing the fiscal burden on the government, subsidy removal can positively impact fiscal balances and contribute to overall economic stability, attracting foreign investment and fostering sustainable growth. Sector-specific analyses are crucial in understanding the diverse consequences of subsidy removal. Okonkwo and Ahmed (2019) explore the sectoral impacts, emphasizing that industries heavily reliant on energy inputs may experience increased production costs, potentially affecting competitive.

Research by Okonkwo and Ahmed (2019) sheds light on the accessibility and affordability of energy resources following subsidy removal. The study emphasizes that the resulting increase in energy prices can disproportionately impact economically vulnerable populations, potentially leading to energy poverty and limiting access to necessities. For instance, Adebayo *et al.* (2018), delve into the specific challenges faced by rural communities. It suggests that subsidy removal can exacerbate existing disparities in energy access between urban and rural areas, hindering socio-economic development in traditionally marginalized regions. The microeconomic consequences of subsidy removal on households are explored by Okafor *et al.* (2020). The study identifies shifts in household spending patterns, indicating that increased energy costs may lead to adjustments in consumption behavior, potentially affecting overall well-being and quality of life.

Additionally, an examination of changes in energy service accessibility post-subsidy removal is presented by Nwankwo *et al.* (2017). The research underscores the importance of understanding how subsidy removal impacts the availability of energy services, particularly in remote or underserved areas, and its subsequent influence on citizen satisfaction. Insights into potential policy interventions and mitigation strategies are offered by the World Bank (2019). The report discusses the importance of accompanying subsidy removal with targeted social safety nets and alternative support mechanisms to shield vulnerable populations from the adverse effects on energy affordability. The sector-specific implications of subsidy removal on energy-intensive industries are explored by Hassan & Olanrewaju, (2016).

Despite the existing body of literature on the impact of energy subsidy removal on citizen satisfaction, a specific gap in the research is evident. The current literature provides substantial insights into economic consequences, accessibility and affordability challenges, citizen perceptions, socio-economic implications, public opinion, and lessons from global experiences.

**METHODOLOGY**

Data for this study were collected using a survey method by the use of a 45-item questionnaire which were used to elicit information from the respondents concerning their level of satisfaction with the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria. Analysis of data so generated was done using mean and standard deviation statistics. The study utilized descriptive research design.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presented the research questions, results and discussions that guided the study.

**4.1 Table 1: Analysis of Respondents Profile.**

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>1</b>	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	170	46
	Female	200	54
<b>2</b>	<b>Age Range</b>		
	18-30	67	18
	31-40	70	19
	41-50	118	32
	Above 51	115	31
<b>3</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Single	89	24
	Married	263	71
	Divorced	18	51
<b>4</b>	<b>Educational Qualifications</b>		
	O-Level	52	14
	OND/NCE	100	27
	HND/BSC	130	35
	MSC/MBA	56	15
	Ph.D	32	9

Source: Field Survey, 2024

As shown in table 1, the sample consisted of 46% males, and 54% of females. The age distribution of the respondents indicated that 18% were between 18 and 30 years old, 19% were aged 31 to 40, 32% were between 41 and 50, and 31% were over 51 years old. Regarding marital status, 24% of the respondents were unmarried, 71% were married and 51% were divorced. Regarding the educational background of respondents, the analysis revealed that majority of the respondents were HND/B.SC holders.

**Research Question One:**

How does the removal of energy subsidy affect the cost of energy resources for Nigerian citizens? In order to answer this question, analysis of the mean and standard deviation of the responses of the households were done and presented on table 2 below.

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of households’ responses on how the removal of energy subsidy affects the cost of energy resources for Nigerian citizens.**

N = 370

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1	Increase in fuel price	3.07	1.03	P
2	Cause of short-term increase in electricity rates for consumers	3.24	0.92	P
3	Increased cost of Kerosene	3.20	0.89	P
4	High cost of diesel	3.35	0.94	P
5	High cost of firewood	3.49	0.72	P
6	Increased cost of cooking gas	3.37	1.02	P
7	High cost of charcoal	3.15	0.75	P
8	Increased cost of public services and infrastructure	2.79	1.00	P
9	Cause of increase in price of goods	3.22	.72	P
10	Major increase in prices of solar generators	3.06	.79	P
11	Led to increased lack of employment in the energy sector	3.14	.89	P
12	Increased price of solar panels	3.29	.82	P
13	High cost of rechargeable light generating appliances	2.86	1.07	P
14	Increase in the price of fuel generators	3.39	.84	P
15	Increased cost of manufacturing	3.37	.84	P
16	Increased cost of mining	3.30	.83	P
17	High cost of accessibility of essential services	3.31	.90	P
	<b>Overall Mean</b>	3.21	.52	P

2.50 and above = Positive

2.49 and below = Negative

P = Positive

N = Negative

The analysis of data in table 2 shows the mean responses of households and their respective standard deviation on how the removal of energy subsidy affects the cost of energy resources for Nigerian citizens. It shows that all the seventeen items of instrument have mean values more than the bench mark mean response of 2.50 with an overall response of 3.2127 and standard deviation of 0.52. This by implication means that items 1-17 are how removal of energy subsidy affect the cost of energy resources for Nigerian citizens.

**Research Question Two:**

What is the impact of energy subsidy removal on the accessibility of energy services in different socio-economic groups? This research question was answered through the analysis of mean response of households in different local governments.

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the households’ responses on the impact of energy subsidy removal on the accessibility of energy services in different socio-economic groups.**

N = 370

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
18	Increase in cost of public transportation	2.95	1.06	P
19	Increase in cost of agricultural products due to increased cost of production activities	2.83	1.16	P
20	Increased cost of essential food commodities	3.11	.82	P
21	Increase in the cost of essential health care services	2.75	1.17	P
22	High cost of agricultural products due to high cost of agricultural activities	3.38	.86	P
23	High cost of educational aids	1.93	1.11	N
24	Reduced employment in the energy sector	3.88	4.15	P
25	Reduced number of fuel pump stations	3.23	.64	P
26	Deprivation of electricity to citizens	3.25	.73	P
27	Low investment in renewable energy	2.73	.86	P
28	Unaffordability of cars for private owners	2.98	.78	P
	<b>Overall Mean</b>	3.00	.62	P

2.50 and above = Positive

2.49 and below = Negative

P = Positive

N = Negative

Table 3 reveals that among items 18 to 28, only item 23 has mean value less than the 2.50 bench mark mean. Every other item in the list has mean value more than 2.50. This implies that in exception of item 23, every other item in tale 3 is an impact of energy subsidy removal on the accessibility of energy services in different socio-economic groups. However, the overall mean response of households is 3.0026 with a standard deviation of 0.62362.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

From the analysis of data in table 2, the fuel subsidy removal would lead to increase in price of essential goods and services. As a result, there would be fewer disposable income in the hands of individuals and small businesses, due to rising prices, stagnant wages and a fixed

national minimum wage.

Table 3 analysis shows how the removal of energy subsidy impacted on the accessibility of energy services in different socio-economic groups. The removal of the fuel subsidy in Nigeria presents a multi-faceted problem characterized by intricate links between economic viability, social equity, sustainability and political stability.

The elimination of fuel subsidy in Nigeria has the potential to have a drastic influence on the electricity pricing, and the power sector while at the same time may cause a short-term difficulties such as an increased electricity rates for consumers, it may also lead to the development of a more efficient and sustainable power industry in Nigeria. Effective enforcement coupled with complementing measures to alleviate the impact on the vulnerable masses, would be critical and important to ensure a seamless transition and long-term benefits for Nigeria's power industry.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the fore-going of this study, the study therefore recommends the following:

1. The government should increase the minimum wage of the gainfully employed workers. This will assist them in coping with the high cost of energy and will ensure there is a support to workers and will also limit the resistance by the labor union.
2. The Nigerian government should bring down the high cost of electricity rates in order to make it more accessible to the low-income earners. There should also be a fixed pump price of gas, regulated by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in order to make petroleum more accessible and affordable.

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