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THE EFFECT OF FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL ON THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study examines the effect of fuel subsidy removal on in Niger State, Nigeria. The main objective of the study is to determine the effect of the subsidy removal on the livelihood of the people of Niger State and to proffer solutions to the problems encountered as a result of the programme. The study adopted the theory of the "Rentier state". the central economic factor of an abundant reserve of natural resources remains the constant element around which the definition is structured. The study adopted the survey research design and obtained its data from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire administered on two hundred (200) respondents in the targeted areas. Simple ramdom sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire to the respondents spread across the Eleven Wards in Munya Local Government Area for a fair and equal representation. Data collected were presented in tables and further analyzed, using the simple percentage to measure significance of data collected. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the policy had led to an increase in the prices of goods and services, making it clear that there is a consensus on the adverse economic consequences of subsidy removal. It was revealed that hike in fuel pump prices along with increases in the cost of food, farm inputs, rent and transport and the general cost of living despite the government effort to cushion the effect of the subsidy removal. The study recommended that Nigerian government should build more refineries through PPP while effort should also be made to ensure proper maintenance, Government should create an enabling environment to engender private investors for the purpose of improving the local refining capacity, Government should also provide palliatives to the masses and there should be transparency and accountability in the sharing of these paliative.

Keywords: fuel subsidy, fuel removal subsidy, corruption, economic reconstruction

The Nigerian economy has been subsidized in various ways for many years and this includes fuel, education, electricity, forex etc. Fuel subsidy began in the 1970s and became institutionalised in 1977, following the promulgation of the Price Control Act which made it illegal for some products (including petrol) to be sold above the regulated price. While the concept of subsidy itself is noble, its administration in Nigeria has been plagued with serious allegations of corruption and mismanagement.
Victoria, Esther, Doris & David (2017) stated that; Petroleum (oil) product remains the bench mark of Nigeria's socio-economic, education, foreign and defense policies. To anyone remotely acquainted with Nigerian politics, oil resources occupy a prominent place in the nation's power equation. The struggle for power is a clear struggle to control the oil resources and improve the lots of one's ethnic group through

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development opportunities. Politics in Nigeria cannot be divorced from oil. National and individual dreams, hopes and aspirations are built around oil.

Nearly 70 years after the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity in Nigeria, Nigeria's oil and gas downstream sector is yet to develop to the desired levels, despite the recent enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA). The downstream sector of the oil and gas industry had the least foreign direct investment compared to the midstream and upstream sectors, and the reason for this is not far-fetched. The current subsidy regime and the legal framework of the downstream sector generally discourages investments www.pwc.com retrieved on 15/8/2023.

Literature Review

Nigeria is not the only country to remove fuel subsidy. In 1997, Indonesia removed fuel subsidy after the Asian financial crisis. Fathurrahman et al. (2017) showed that the reallocation of subsidy payments to low-income households could slow down economic development but improve social welfare. However, removing fuel subsidy usually comes with the promise of using the money saved from subsidy to undertake targeted reform. But in Indonesia, citizens find promises to replace fuel subsidies with targeted spending less credible and would resist the reform if they believe the government is corrupt (Kyle, 2018). The removal of fuel subsidy increased the domestic price of fuel and suddenly ignited protests and violent riots which occurred for weeks and forced the incumbent government to resign in 1998 (Chelminski, 2018). Dartanto (2013) examined the relationship between existing fuel subsidies and fiscal balance in Indonesia between 1998 and 2013 and found that removing 25 percent of fuel subsidies increased poverty by 0.259 percentage points while 100 percent removal of fuel subsidies and the reallocation of 50 percent of them to government spending decreased poverty by 0.277 percentage points. Other international studies have also analysed the effect of fuel subsidy removal. Harring et al. (2023) analysed cross-country attitudes towards fossil fuel subsidy removal and found that the public would have positive attitudes towards subsidy removal if there were optimal use of the saved fiscal revenues. In Malaysia, Chatri (2014) assessed the economy-wide effect of gas subsidy removal in the power sector and found that gas subsidy reduction led to increase in the price of electricity followed by a decline in demand for electricity by other economic sectors and a decrease in gross domestic product. Antimiani et al. (2023) showed that fossil fuels are still highly subsidised in EU countries, and there are deliberations to remove fossil fuel subsidies and reuse the revenues to foster the technological transition to a sustainable and decarbonised EU economy. Sampedro et al. (2017) also argued that fossil fuel subsidy is a barrier to tackling climate change in the EU because it diverts investment away from clean energy sources, and fossil fuel subsidies amounted to US$233 billion in 2014 which is four times the amount of subsidies allocated to promote renewable energy. However, they showed that fuel subsidy removal would give rise to only a small reduction in CO2 because people would switch from fuel to coal and gas. Nowag et al. (2021) suggest the use of state aid to phase out fossil fuel subsidies in the EU. Erickson et al. (2017) showed that the removal of tax incentives and other fossil fuel support policies could hasten the attainment of the G20 climate commitments. Lin and Li (2012) examined the case of China and showed that fuel subsidy removal would generate negative externalities in China but would generate positive externalities to other world regions without subsidy removal.

Available literature has shown that Nigeria is the largest in Africa and the sixth largest oil producing in the world. The country's economic strength is derived largely from its oil and gas wealth, which contribute 99% of government revenues and 38.8% of GDP (FGN, 2010). This has generated billions of dollars in revenue over the last fifty years since oil was found in Nigeria. However, as in most developing countries, this has not translated into an improved welfare condition for the people. Instead through inefficiencies, corruption, abuse of national monopoly powers, mismanagement, smuggling, bureaucratic bottlenecks and excessive subsidizing the supply of refined crude oil products in the country has Virtually collapsed (Ibanga, 2011; Balouga, 2012).

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The issue of petroleum products pricing has always been sensitive in Nigeria that it ought to always be carefully and tactfully handled. Due to low income of the people and poor infrastructural development especially in transportation, communication system and electric power system, the effect of petroleum products price increase is easily felt by people. For five decades now, Nigeria's economic policies, growth and other related activities have been largely influenced by the oil industry. To say that the economy is heavily dependent on the oil industry will amount to an understatement as the oil industry is nothing short of a life-blood for the Nigerian economy (Adelabu, 2012).

In another study conducted by Oyishi (2012) have discussed how subsidy removal contributes to higher prices of petroleum products, influencing the overall cost of goods and services. This correspondence between the respondents' perspectives and scholarly discussions supports the literature's emphasis on the inflationary impact of fuel subsidy removal.

Okechukwu (2022) also asserted that fuel subsidy fosters corruption in Nigeria. They suggest that a group of corrupt individuals actively undermines efforts to maintain existing refineries and obstructs the construction of new ones, thus perpetuating fuel importation and the retention of fuel subsidy for their self-serving interests

Despite Nigeria being the largest in Africa and the sixth largest oil producing country in the world, successive Nigerian governments have been unable to use the oil wealth to significantly reduce poverty, provide basic social and economic services her citizens need (Ering & Akpan 2012). Fuel subsidy was, before the coming of the Goodluck Jonathan's administration, a policy of the Federal Government meant to assist the people of Nigeria to cushion the effects of economic hardship. The Federal government has always canvassed and lobby for fuel subsidy removal, it happened in Goodluck's administration, Buhari and now in Tinubu's regime. An interesting matter from the economy is the issue of fuel subsidy removal, which has been a great controversy for Nigerians. Aniobi, Adedokun, Akinsanmi and Nweze (2021) revealed that huge successes were recorded from the massive utilization of solid minerals before the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in Nigeria. The issue of fuel subsidy removal has been in Nigeria for some decades of which different governments have tried to implement the reform but were unsuccessful due to fierce public demonstration of disapproval. This has often led to mass protests by the citizens and the civil society who regard such policy as a measure to further subjugate and impoverish the masses. Prior to the removal of fuel subsidy, Nigeria did not have sufficient money to fund the development of critical public infrastructure. Ozili & Obiora (2023) In a study on the implications of fuel subsidy removal on the Nigerian economy they stated that lack of sufficient funds led the government to incur huge debts to finance the budget. However, with the removal of fuel subsidy in 2023, the government could use these funds and channel them appropriately for the purpose of developing critical public infrastructure in Nigeria. This outcome can only occur if the government is transparent, honest and is held to account, to ensure that the saved funds from fuel subsidy removal are channelled to the development of critical public infrastructure.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the theory of the "Rentier state". The theory of the rentier state emerged in the 1960s, and became fully formed in the 1980s, and has since then undergone some adjustments. Although the central economic factor of an abundant reserve of natural resources remains the constant element around which the definition is structured, its political and economic implications have been under discussion. Reductive, automatic reflexes are no longer appropriate; If they are not already being addressed, anomalies need to be reconsidered and their context taken into account.

The elaboration of the concept of the "rentier state" began around the turn of the 1970s, when energy demand was continuously increasing and the rapid hike in energy prices inflated the economies of oil and gas producing states. The attention was focused on the middle-East area, since these countries were dominating the energy market during this period. The first analysts to employ the expression "rentier state"

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did so with reference to Libya (Robert Mabro in 1969) and Iran (Hossein Mahdavy in 1970), while Hazem Bablawi and Giacomo Luciani in 1987 proposed more general bases with regard to the Arab oil states.

The theory of the rentier state, put forward by Giacomo Luciano and HazemBelawi in 1987 was to become the simple model dominating middle Eastern studies for a quarter of a century. Rent became the cornerstone of a general system of organization and was used to explain not only the economies and state bureaucracies but also the functioning of societies at large. Describing Iran at the very end of the 1960s, Iranian academic Hussein Mahdavi, characterized the rentier state as one which receives substantial revenue in the form of external rent in the instance in exchange for the sale of oil. Bablawi and Luciani attributed four essential characteristics to the rentier state: rent constitutes the predominant national revenue, the domestic production sector is weak and the economy is extremely specialized on one product; a limited proportion of the population participates in the generation of rents; the state is the principal recipient of revenue.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The survey research method was adopted for this study. The primary and secondary sources were used for data collection. Under the primary method, questionnaire was used and secondary data were sourced from books, journals, internet materials, government publications and other printed materials. The data collected were further analysed using simple percentage and the discussion was completed with the information from other sources.

The population of the study include the adult citizens living in Munya Local Government Area of Niger State. According to the 2006 National Population and Housing Census, the total population of People in Munya Local Government Area is 103,651.

In selecting the sample size, based on the population of the study, the sample size will be determine at 5% error tolerance and 95% degree of confidence, using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size N = population size e = error tolerance (5%)
1 = constant

From the study, the sample size is computed as:

$$n = \frac{103,651}{1+103,651(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{103,651}{1+270.28}$$

$$n = \frac{103,651}{270.85}$$ n = 199.5 Therefore,
≈≈ n=200.

From the above target population, simple stratified and simple ramdom sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire to the respondents spread across the Eleven Wards in Munya Local Government Area for a fair and equal representation. The researcher also saw to himself the existing structures (amenities).

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The study used both primary and secondary method of data collection. Questionnaire instrument was used to generate the primary data.

Data collected were analyzed, using the simple percentage to measures significance of data collected.

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Data Presentation and Analysis

Copies of the questionnaires were administered to gather responses from respondents so as to complement the data collected through observations and oral interviews.

1. **Removal of fuel subsidy has led to increase in the prices of household basic needs.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	185	92.5
Agree	10	5
Undecided	3	1.5
Disagree	2	1
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	200	100

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2024

From the above table 92.5% strongly agreed, 5% agreed, undecided 1.5%, disagree 1%, and strongly disagree 0%. This has clearly indicated that the removal of fuel subsidy has led to increase in prices of household basic needs This is in agreement with a study conducted by Ering &Akpan (2012) to study the politics of fuel subsidy, Populist Resistance and its Socio-Economic Implications for Nigeria, using development racism theory, the study discovered that despite Nigeria being the largest in Africa and the sixth largest oil producing country in the world, successive Nigerian governments have been unable to use the oil wealth to significantly reduce poverty, provide basic social and economic services her citizens need. Fuel subsidy was, before the coming of the Goodluck Jonathan's administration, a policy of the Federal Government meant to assist the people of Nigeria to cushion the effects of economic hardship.

2. **Removal of fuel subsidy has led to increase in the prices of farm inputs.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	190	95
Agree	5	2.5
Undecided	0	0
Disagree	2	1
Strongly Disagree	3	1.5
Total	200	100

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2024

From the above table 95% strongly agreed, 2.5% agreed, undecided 0%, disagree 1%, and strongly disagree 1.5%. This clearly shows that a very high percentage of the respondents agree that subsidy removal has led to increase in prices of farm inputs in the study area. The study agrees with a study conducted by Onyishi (2012) have discussed how subsidy removal contributes to higher prices of petroleum products, influencing the overall cost of goods and services. This correspondence between the respondents' perspectives and scholarly discussions supports the literature's emphasis on the inflationary impact of fuel subsidy removal.

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3. **Removal of fuel subsidy has led to increase in school fees and cost of transporting children to school.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	100	50
Agree	50	25
Undecided	10	5
Disagree	30	15
Strongly Disagree	20	10
Total	200	100

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2024

From the above table 50% strongly agreed, 25% agreed, undecided 5%, disagree 15%, and strongly disagree 10%. The issue of petroleum products pricing has always been sensitive in Nigeria that it ought to always be carefully and tactfully handled. Due to low income of the people and poor infrastructural development especially in transportation, communication system and electric power system, the effect of petroleum products price increase is easily felt by people. For five decades now, Nigeria's economic policies, growth and other related activities have been largely influenced by the oil industry. . To say that the economy is heavily dependent on the oil industry will amount to an understatement as the oil industry is nothing short of a life-blood for the Nigerian economy (Adelabu, 2012).

4. **Removal of fuel subsidy has led to increase in poverty rate of Nigerian citizens.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	185	92.5
Agree	10	5
Undecided	3	1.5
Disagree	2	1
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	200	100

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2024

From the above table 92.5% strongly agreed, 5% agreed, undecided 1.5%, disagree 1%, and strongly disagree 0%. These responses agree with Okechukwu (2022) who asserted that fuel subsidy fosters corruption in Nigeria. They suggest that a group of corrupt individuals actively undermines efforts to maintain existing refineries and obstructs the construction of new ones, thus perpetuating fuel importation and the retention of fuel subsidy for their self-serving interests

5. **Palliative will reduce the effect of fuel subsidy removal on Nigerian citzens.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	20	10
Agree	5	2.5
Undecided	5	2.5
Disagree	70	35
Strongly Disagree	100	50
Total	200	100

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Source: Researcher's Survey, 2024

From the above table 10 % strongly agreed, 2.5% agreed, undecided 2.5%, disagree 35%, and strongly disagree 50%. It shows that greater proportion of the respondents disagreed that palliatives will cushion of fuel subsidy removal on the cost of living in Nigeria. As shown in the literature review, Omotosho (2020) offered insights into the economic implications of subsidy removal and the need for supportive measures. The concerns expressed by the respondents align with the literature emphasizing the hardships and economic challenges associated with the removal of fuel subsidies.

6. **Nigerians will benefit from the proceeds of the fuel subsidy removal in future Nigerians.**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	50	25
Agree	53	15
Undecided	7	3.5
Disagree	30	26.5
Strongly Disagree	60	30
Total	200	100

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2024.

From the above table 25 % strongly agreed, 15% agreed, undecided 3.5%, disagree 26.5%, and strongly disagree 30%. It shows that greater proportion of the respondents disagreed that fuel subsidy removal will benefit Nigerians in the long term. The respondents' opinions on the long-term benefits of fuel subsidy removal align with the literature that has presented contrasting perspectives on the subject. As stated by Ozili & Obiora (2023) In a study on the implications of fuel subsidy removal on the Nigerian economy they stated that lack of sufficient funds led the government to incur huge debts to finance the budget. However, with the removal of fuel subsidy in 2023, the government could use these funds and channel them appropriately for the purpose of developing critical public infrastructure in Nigeria. This outcome can only occur if the government is transparent, honest and is held to account, to ensure that the saved funds from fuel subsidy removal are channelled to the development of critical public infrastructure.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the findings from this study revealed significant concerns among respondents regarding the removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria. This is evident in the responses of respondents which majority strongly agreed or agreed that the policy had led to an increase in the prices of goods and services, making it clear that there is a consensus on the adverse economic consequences of subsidy removal. The politics of fuel subsidy removal has showed that Nigeria is a country of paradox. Citizens always ask that how can citizens of an oil producing country pay more for fuel which is found in abundance in the country? Successive government appears adamant in the quest to remove fuel subsidy. The people are equally resolved in its opposition to the removal of subsidy. Nigeria is up for the rough times ahead, the time has come for the final determination whether those in government drive their power from the people or whether they are independent and own their stay in power to other entities other than the people.

The removal of subsidy, is purposely to reduce government spendings and to use the proceeds of the subsidy removal towards infrastructural development for the benefit of the populace. But this appears to have worsened the economic conditions of Nigerians, particularly the poor. With the removal of fuel subsidy comes indiscriminate and hike in fuel pump prices along with increases in the cost of food, farm inputs, rent and transport and the general cost of living despite the government effort to cushion the effect of the subsidy removal. In Nigeria, increases in fuel pump prices have historically dovetailed with promises for economic reconstruction since the 1970s (Okogu, 1993). However, the sacrifices made hardly ever yield

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considerable benefits, this development has ruptured the social contract between the people and the government which has led to the former's distrust for the latter's institutions and programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Nigerian government should build more refineries through PPP while effort should also be made to ensure proper maintenance, the strengthening of the fight against corruption and the establishment of a regulatory framework to protect citizens as necessary measures to increased capacity utilization on the existing refineries to stem the tide of petroleum products importation to improve the poor state Nigeria's economy and society
- Government should create an enabling environment to engender private investors for the purpose of improving the local refining capacity to meet the ever increasing local demand of petroleum products and indeed for exportation purpose. Related to the above is the need to use the oil windfall proceeds and the savings realized by the federal government and from the withdrawal of subsidy to be channeled towards fixing the refineries, building new ones or upgrading and developing of infrastructure within the polity in areas such as water ways, rail and mass transit system, thus providing cheaper alternative transportation methods. There is also the need to budget more funds towards improving both education and the health care delivery system in Nigeria.
- The government should adjust the minimum wage upwardly so as to cushion the effect of the subsidy removal on the people.
- Government should also provide palliatives to the masses and there should be transparency and accountability in the sharing of these paliative.

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