IJEMD-SS, 5 (4) Special Issue (2026) https://doi.org/10.54938/ijemdss.2026.05.4.577

International Journal of Emerging Multidisciplinaries: Social Science

Research Paper
Journal Homepage: www.ojs.ijemd.com
ISSN (print): 2957-5311

Perceived Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal Policy on Lecturers' Job Satisfaction in Public Universities in Southeast of Nigeria

Ezeodo, Calista Chinwe [1*]

1. *Department of Social Science Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka*

Email: calista.ezeodo@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

The main aim of this study was to ascertain the perceived impact of fuel subsidy removal policy on Lecturers' job satisfaction in public Universities in Southeast of Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The sample size was 400 Lecturers. The instrument for data collection were structured questionnaires titled "Perceived Reasons for the Introduction of Fuel Subsidy Removal Policy (PRIFSRPQ), Perceived Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal Policy on Lecturers' Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (PIFSRPLJSQ) and Perceived Strategies for Boosting Lecturer's Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSBLJSQ). The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that fuel subsidy removal policy lead to increase in cost of living, decrease in lecturers' disposable income. The study recommended that government should re-allocate resources meant for fuel subsidies to critical sectors such as infrastructure, social programs, and development projects.

Keywords: Fuel subsidy removal policy, job satisfaction, public universities, lecturers, equity theory

Email Address: calista.ezeodo@unn.edu.ng

Introduction

In the recent years, Nigerian government has faced economic challenges resulting to elimination of fuel subsidies. Fuel costs frequently rise when fuel subsidies are removed, which can affect the living standard and economic stability of individuals (Anijah, 2024). Subsidy is a financial offer from government or groups to help reduce the cost of goods, services, or production and; can be in the form of direct payments, tax breaks, reduced interest rates, or other incentives to achieve particular economic or social goals. Subsidies includes economic assistance rendered by the government in power to harmonize the prices of some commodities, and promote certain activities, such as agriculture, renewable energy, or education to make them more affordable for the citizens and encourage growth and development in the society. The Price Control Act of 1977 gave impetus to the introduction of subsidies on some products including petrol in Nigeria to cushion the effects of inflation occasioned by surge in energy prices. According to Eze & Umeh, (2023), fuel subsidy is a government policy or financial assistance program designed to lower the price of fuel. Fuel subsidy is a policy that seeks to lower the fuel pump price or providing financial aid to fuel producers or distributors to keep prices low. Primarily, fuel subsidies aims to lower living costs, promote sustainable development and energy accessibility (Imbazi, 2025).

On the other hand, fuel subsidy removal policy refers to the discontinuation of government financial assistance aimed at reducing the price of fuel. These subsidies are used to keep the pump price of fuel artificially low, benefiting consumers and businesses by reducing transportation and energy costs. Hence, when a government removes these subsidies, several effects can occur which includes: increased fuel prices. Without subsidies, fuel prices tend to rise to reflect market rates. This can lead to higher costs for transportation, goods, and services. Also higher fuel costs can lead to inflation, as transportation increase (Afunugo and Chukwukamma, 2024). This can affect the overall economy, potentially slowing growth. Subsidy removal can free up government funds previously spent on subsidies, allowing for reallocation to other sectors like healthcare, education, or infrastructure. Between 2005 and 2021, the expenditure on fuel subsidies was about N13trillion (US$74 billion) (Pedabo, 2023). However, N13trillion is like ten-year capital expenditures of Nigeria's budget for defense, health, education and agriculture.

Consequently, the change in fuel price affects the price of every commodity and essential services. As a result, rise in the price of fuel price may have potential effect on the general prices across the country (Okwa et al., 2024). Under President Yakubu Gowon administration in 1973, the price of fuel price rose from 6 kobo to 8.45kobo. Murtala Mohammad in 1976 increased it from 8.45kobo to 9kobo. In 1978, Olusengun Obasanjo increased the pump price of fuel from 9kobo to 15.3kobo; Shehu Shagari in 1982 increases it to 20kobo. Ibrahim Babangida increased fuel price to 39.5kobo in 1986 and; to 42kobo in 1988; 60kobo in 1989; 70kobo in 1991 60kobo. In 1993, fuel pump price was increased to 5naira under Shonekan’s administration.

Accordingly, Abacha in 1994 increased it to 15 naira. Abdulsalam Abubakar increased to 25 naira in 1998 and to 20 naira in 1999. In the year 2000 the price rose to 30 naira under Obasanjo; 42naira in 2003; 50naira in 2004 and from 50naira to 65naira the same year; and to 75naira in 2007. Under president Yar’ Adua, the price of fuel rose from 75naira to 65naira in 2007 and to 141 naira during Goodluck Jonathan’s regime in 2012. In 2016, Buhari’s administration increased fuel price to 145naira; to 165naira and 212 naira in 2021. Following the emergence of President Tinubu in 2023, the price of fuel rose from 220naira to 617naira; to 898naira and to 1,050 naira in

2023, 2024 and 2025 (Orluchukwu, & Thankgod, 2024). Any increase in fuel price leads to increase in prices consumers goods and services, poverty, inequality and decrease in the standard of living. High cost of fuel could be have a psychological impact on individuals (Ikenga & Oluka, 2023).

Nonetheless, Lecturers under the umbrella of the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) have in recent years complained bitterly about the low remuneration of Lecturers in Nigerian universities, and the 2023 declaration to remove subsidy by President Tinubu affects every Nigerian, especially the Lecturers. The current fuel subsidy removal policy regime in Nigeria was negotiated during Muhammadu Buhari’s administration due to the outrageous spending on subsidization of fuel, which affects the funding of other sectors of the country’s economy, and the attitudes of many entities buying petrol in Nigeria and supplying to other countries (Nduka, 2017). Since then, different sectors in Nigeria have complained about poor funding that has resulted to low productivity in the economy. The present government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu promised to remove the fuel subsidy, so that fuel price will be determined by market price. The fuel subsidy removal policy was an act of negotiation reached in 2016, and implemented by Tinubu’s administration in 2023. This removal fuel subsidy could have huge impact on the standard of living of different individuals living in Nigeria, and may lead to poor job satisfaction among civil servants especially Lecturers in public universities.

An employee feeling of pleasure due to job favorable job conditions is known job satisfaction. Such satisfaction focuses on both emotional and psychological well-being that individuals experience when their jobs align with their personal values and expectations. It connotes degree of satisfaction derived from a job (Spector, 2018). This emphasizes the level of contentment and fulfillment individuals derive from their work. Job satisfaction is the fulfilment, which relates to job behaviors and outcomes (Robbins & Judge, 2017). This definition highlights how job satisfaction can influence Lecturer's motivation and their performance at work.

Lecturers are dedicated university staff who serves as a foundation for the country's intellectual and educational progress. With their commitment to advancing knowledge, research, teaching and community service, Lecturers are essential contributors to the growth and development of the nation. The impact of fuel subsidy removal on university Lecturers could be multifaceted, with consequences that crawl into various aspects of their lives ranging from the economic impact and associated increased costs of living. Conversely, Imbazi (2025) maintained that fuel subsidy removal affects staff performance.

The removal of fuel subsidy can reduce disposable income of university Lecturers in Nigeria, since a substantial portion of their salaries are allocated to transportation, and less money may be available for other necessities and personal savings. Fuel subsidy removal policy has inflationary effects, often contributing to overall inflation that can affect market prices. Due to the financial strain from increased fuel prices, Lecturers may face higher costs of living, which can erode their purchasing power, increases stress and psychological impact that can hinder job satisfaction.

Such financial worries can negatively affect their overall well-being, mental health, and job satisfaction. That is why Rodrigo et al. (2022) argued that guaranteeing employees’ job satisfaction leads to improvement in job performance. Fuel Subsidy removal policy can also affect the quality of life and work-life balance of university Lecturers, as higher fuel costs can reduce the time available for lecturers to teach students, and the time spent with their families and engaging in leisure activities. Such situation can affect work-life balance and quality of life and job satisfaction of university Lecturers in southeast, Nigeria leading due to increased financial stress that can hinder their research productivity, teaching and community service. Nevertheless, Yen and Cuong (2026) buttressed that increase in job performance is a product of increased in job satisfaction.

In addition, teaching quality is at risk as high cost of transportation and increased stress can affect the quality of teaching because Lecturers may find it challenging to maintain the same level of enthusiasm and effectiveness in the classroom. Danlami et al. (2023) stated that fuel subsidy removal influenced teaching staff job performance at Niger State College of Education. More so, Anijah (2024) indicated that the financial burden associated with fuel subsidy removal has great impact on well-being and productivity of academic staff in college of education in southeast. Thus, it can affect professional and career development of university Lecturers in Nigeria, as it can lead to professional mobility, where by some Lecturers may consider seeking employment opportunities in other locations with lower living costs or better financial incentives, affecting the stability and continuity of the university academic workforce.

Notably, the economic complexities surrounding subsidy removal policies can influences employees' job performance and productivity in tertiary institutions. Mohammed et al. (2023) noted that fuel subsidy removal had negatively affected staff efficiency in Nigerian institute of leather and science technology, Zaria. In the area of recruitment, the university's ability to attract and retain top-tier academic talent may be influenced by the challenges associated with fuel subsidy removal. Prospective Lecturers may weigh the economic and social consequences before accepting positions at the university. Even holding some top positions like Head of Department and other positions that facilitate the smooth running of the department could be rejected by Lecturers as they don't have enough finance to maintain such top positions. Moreover, can lead to collective industrial actions to demand for higher salaries, improved working conditions, or other measures to mitigate the economic consequences. These actions could have broader implications for the university system given the tendency of the policy to affect the cost of living, which may make it difficult for Lecturers to provide for their family.

Purpose of Study

The major purpose of this study is to ascertain the perceived impact of fuel subsidy removal policy on Lecturers' job satisfaction in public Universities in Southeast of Nigeria.

Specifically, the study seeks to find out the:

1. perceived reasons for the introduction of fuel subsidy removal policy in Nigeria.

2. impacts of fuel subsidy removal policy on Lecturers' job satisfaction in public Universities in Southeast of Nigeria.

3. perceived strategies for alleviating the impact removal of fuel subsidy removal policy.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study

1. What are the perceived reasons for the introduction of fuel subsidy removal policy in Nigeria?

2. What is the impact of fuel subsidy removal policy on Lecturer's job satisfaction in public Universities in Southeast of Nigeria?

3. What are the perceived strategies that can alleviate the impact of fuel subsidy removal policy on Lecturers in public universities in Southeast of Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Equity Theory of J. Stacy Adams (1963). Equity theory posits that individuals strive for fairness and equity in social exchanges and compares the inputs and outputs with those of others to achieve a balance and if there is inequity, individuals may feel distressed and then strives to restore fairness, either by reducing their inputs or outcomes. This theory plays a crucial role in understanding motivation, job satisfaction, and interpersonal relationships in various settings, including the workplace.

The Equity Theory becomes relevant in this study because it would be used to evaluate university Lecturers' job satisfaction by considering the economic changes resulting from fuel subsidy removal policy and how these changes influence their work conditions and overall well-being. Understanding perceived equity or inequity can shed light on the potential effects on job satisfaction in this specific academic setting, the framework would involve assessing Lecturers' perceptions of the balance between their efforts (inputs) and the rewards they receive, relative to their colleagues in civil service. Factors such as salary adjustments, workload changes, and overall working conditions influenced by the fuel subsidy removal policy would be considered. The framework should also explore how perceived equity or inequity affects Lecturers' job satisfaction. This suggests that Lecturers who feel that the effect of fuel subsidy removal was positive may experience higher job satisfaction, while those that perceived the effect as harsh may experience dissatisfaction that can potentially affecting their overall well-being and professional engagement.

Research Method

Descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study comprised (8,117) Lecturers in in eight public universities in the southeast, Nigeria. These include Nnamdi Azikiwe University (2810), Ebonyi State University (808), Abia State University (608), Imo State University (729), Enugu State University of Science and Technology (768), Alex Ekweme Federal University (865) lecturers, Chukwuemeka Odomegwu Ojukwu University (471), Micheal Okpala University of Agriculture (1,058) (Source: NUC Statistics, 2019). Simple random sampling technique was used to sample 50 Lecturers each from the eight public universities e.i 400 Lecturers. Structured questionnaires titled "Perceived Reasons for the Introduction of Fuel Subsidy Removal Policy (PRIFSRPQ), Perceived Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal Policy on Lecturers' Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (PIFSRPLJSQ) and Perceived Strategies for Boosting Lecturer's Job Satisfaction

Questionnaire (PSBLJSQ) were administered to the Lecturers in public universities. PRIFSRPQ, PIFSRPLJSQ and PSBLJSQ were subjected to face and content validity as well as reliability test. Cronbach Alpha reliability estimates of .76, .68, and .72 generated showed that the instruments are reliable. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. A benchmark of 2.50 and above was established as the acceptance region and mean scores below the benchmark of 2.50 was rejected.

Results

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores on the perceived reasons for the introduction of fuel subsidy removal policy in Nigeria N=400

Items	Mean	SD
To reduce financial burden of fuel subsidy on the government	2.99	0.87
To help the government manage its budget more effectively and reduce deficit	2.88	0.91
To encourage market-driven fuel pricing	2.79	0.91
To spend a significant amount of foreign exchange on improving fuel quality	2.75	0.95
To re-allocate resources previously used for fuel subsidies to fund infrastructure and development projects	2.66	0.97
To curb corruption, smuggling and other illegal fuel activities	2.60	1.02

The mean scores in Table 1 represents the responses on the perceived reasons why the government introduced fuel subsidy removal policy in Nigeria. Since the items recorded mean scores of 2.50, and above, this means that all the items on the table are the reasons the government introduced removed fuel subsidy removal. Therefore, the perceived reasons why the government introduced fuel subsidy removal policy in Nigeria include: to reduce financial burden of fuel subsidy on the government; help the government manage its budget more effectively and reduce deficit; to encourage market-driven fuel pricing; to spend a significant amount of foreign exchange on improving fuel quality; to re-allocate resources previously used for fuel subsidies to fund infrastructure and development projects and; to curb corruption, smuggling and other illegal fuel activities. The corresponding standard deviations scores revealed less variability in mean responses of the Lecturers.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores on the Perceived impact of fuel subsidy removal policy on Lecturer's job satisfaction in public universities in southeast, Nigeria. N=400

Items	Mean	SD
Increase in transport fares, affect daily transportation to the university	3.15	0.58
Increase in the cost of living affect Lecturers' budgets for necessities like food, housing and utilities	2.96	0.63
Decrease in disposable income impact Lecturers ability to engage in non-essential activities or make discretionary purchases	2.90	0.71
High rate of financial strain that potentially affects Lecturers' ability to meet financial obligations	2.89	0.77

Fuel subsidy removal limits Lecturers access to medical services	2.30	0.83
Inability to afford increased cost of professional development programs	2.17	0.85

The mean scores on Table 2 shows that respondents perceived that fuel subsidy removal policy leads to increase in transport fares, affect daily transportation to the university; increase in the cost of living affect Lecturers' budgets for necessities like food, housing and utilities; decrease in disposable income impact Lecturers ability to engage in non-essential activities or make discretionary purchases and High rate of financial strain that potentially affects Lecturers' ability to meet financial obligations, which impacts Lecturer's job satisfaction in public Universities in Southeast of Nigeria. The standard deviation scores on the other hand indicated less variability in the responses.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation scores on the perceived strategies for boosting Lecturer's job satisfaction after the removal of fuel subsidy N=400

Items	Mean	SD
Enhancing Lecturers' salaries or providing additional allowances to offset increase in transportation costs	3.45	0.42
Implementation of flexible schedule or remote work options to reduce commuting expenses and improve work life balance	3.38	0.49
Offering opportunities for continuous learning and career advancement to keep Lecturers motivated and engaged	3.36	0.57
Acknowledging Lecturers' efforts through regular recognition programs, acknowledging their contributions to Education.	3.24	0.69
Providing transportation subsidies or incentives to ease the financial burden on Lecturers commuting to work	3.18	0.74
Involving Lecturers in decision-making process related to economic policy changes	3.11	0.77

Mean scores in Table 3 revealed the perceived strategies that can boost job satisfaction of Lecturer's in public universities in Southeast of Nigeria after the removal of fuel subsidy. The perceived strategies include: Enhancing Lecturers' salaries or providing additional allowances to offset increase in transportation costs; **i**mplementation of flexible schedule or remote work options to reduce commuting expenses and improve work life balance; offering opportunities for continuous learning and career advancement to keep Lecturers motivated and engaged; acknowledging Lecturers' efforts through regular recognition programs, acknowledging their contributions to Education; providing transportation subsidies or incentives to ease the financial burden on Lecturers commuting to work and; involving Lecturers in decision-making process related to economic policy changes. The standard deviations scores equally showed close variability in the mean responses.

Discussions

The findings revealed that the perceived reasons fuel subsidy removal policy was introduced in Nigeria. The reasons include to: reduce financial burden of fuel subsidy on the government; help the government manage its budget more effectively and reduce deficit; encourage market-driven fuel pricing; spend a significant amount of foreign exchange on improving fuel quality; re-allocate resources previously used for fuel subsidies to fund infrastructure and development projects and; curb corruption, smuggling and other illegal fuel activities. In line with the above findings, Adeyeye (2023) contended that the fuel subsidy is a burden on governments' expenditure. On the contrary, the reason removal of fuel subsidy policy was introduced could be probably due to the fact that World Bank has consistently advised Federal Government of Nigeria to remove fuel subsidy citing Nigeria's precarious fiscal and debt profile.

The findings equally revealed that the perceived impacts of fuel subsidy removal policy on Lecturers' job satisfaction due to the consequent economic effects of the policy on transport fares that affected Lecturers' daily transportation cost to work, increase in the cost of living, which affects Lecturers' budgets for purchasing necessities like food, housing and utilities, decrease in disposable income, Lecturers' ability to engage in non-essential activities or make discretionary purchases and high rate of financial strain that potentially affects Lecturers' ability to meet financial obligations. To corroborate the above findings, Danlami, Ibrahim and Abdulkadir (2023) maintained that fuel subsidy removal influenced teaching staff job performance at Niger State College of Education. Similarly, Anijah (2024) argued that the financial burden associated with fuel subsidy removal has great impact on well-being and productivity of academic staff in college of education in southeast. While Mohammed, Ibeabuchi, Sulaiman and Igiri (2023) added that fuel subsidy removal had negatively affected staff efficiency in Nigerian institute of leather and science technology, Zaria.

Imperatively, the identified impacts of fuel subsidy removal policy on Lecturers could be attributed to the country's historic economic malaise and the fact that there was no pre-planned programs or arrangements by the government on how to cushion the effect of the policy implementation on Nigerians. This explains why Nigerians do not feel the expected benefits of fuel subsidy removal policy on the economy.

The findings also indicated that the impact of fuel subsidies on Lecturers in public universities in Southeast of Nigeria, can be alleviated through applying strategies such as enhancing lecturers' salaries or providing additional allowances to offset increased transportation, implementation of flexible schedule or remote work options to reduce transportation expenses and improve work life balance, offering opportunities for continuous learning and career advancement to keep Lecturers motivated and engaged, acknowledging Lecturers' efforts through regular recognition programs, acknowledging their contributions to education, providing transportation subsidies or incentives to ease the financial burden on Lecturers, and; involving Lecturers in decision-making process related to economic policy changes to ensure their voices are heard and concerns are addressed. In support of the above findings, Abu, Mohammed, Muhammad and Ahmed (2024) stressed that the impacts of fuel subsidy can be reduced through implementation of social welfare programs to support vulnerable individuals in the country. Above all, the findings of this study are in agreement with the Adams (1963) Equity theory, which stated that individuals strive for fairness and equity in social exchanges and as such tend to compare job performance with the accrued job satisfaction. Thus, the economic changes associated with fuel subsidy removal policy in Nigeria affects work conditions leading to job dissatisfaction, decline in overall well-being of Lecturers, as well as in professional engagement and job satisfaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the introduction of the fuel subsidy removal policy in Nigeria was driven by the need to attain economic sustainability, fiscal responsibility, market efficiency, resource reallocation, and to reduce corruption in the oil sector. Additionally, fuel subsidy removal policy greatly impacts the job satisfaction of Lecturers in public universities in southeast, Nigeria. Perceived strategies that can alleviate the impact of fuel subsidy on Lecturers were revealed to include enhancement of Lecturers' salaries or providing additional allowances to offset increased transportation, implementation of flexible schedule or remote work options to reduce transportation expenses and improve work life balance, offering opportunities for continuous learning and career advancement to keep Lecturers motivated and engaged, acknowledging Lecturers' efforts through regular recognition programs, acknowledging their contributions to education, providing transportation subsidies or incentives to ease the financial burden on Lecturers, and; involving Lecturers in decision-making process related to economic policy changes to ensure their voices are heard and concerns are addressed.

Recommendations

Recommendations were made in line with the findings as follows:

1. The Nigerian government should re-allocate resources meant for fuel subsidies to critical sectors such as infrastructure, social programs, and development projects. Such reallocation can help improve the overall well-being of university Lecturers and contribute to long-term economic sustainability.

2. The government should implement and maintain market-driven pricing for fuel to foster a more efficient and competitive market. This approach will allow fuel prices to reflect actual production and distribution costs, reducing opportunities for corruption and smuggling within the fuel distribution system

3. Universities should implement flexible schedules or remote work options to reduce commuting expenses, improve work-life balance for Lecturers, and ensure that they remain motivated and productive.

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