



Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on the Academic Performance of NCE Chemistry Students in Public Colleges Of Education in North-West Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study surveyed the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the academic performance of NCE Chemistry students in public colleges of education in north-west Nigeria. Two research questions steered the study. The research employed a descriptive survey design. The study population consisted of 1,520 students from ten public colleges of education in north-western Nigeria. The sample comprises 150 NCE III students from three colleges of education in the region. The sampling was conducted using both simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Mean was used for the analysis of the collected data. Discoveries from the research indicates how the removal of fuel subsidy affects the performance of chemistry students in these colleges are very negative, and they include lack of adequate funds to manage the colleges, poor academic outcomes from the students, lack of concentration by the lecturers, low concentration in learning by the students, sexual harassments, untimely death by cohabitation, unwanted pregnancy, cyber fraud, poor pay for lecturers and lack of research funding for lecturers. Furthermore, the study found that ways to mitigate the effect of fuel subsidy removal include increasing lecturers' pay, introducing student loans, making research grants accessible, introducing free education in Nigerian universities, introducing free transportation in universities, introducing free feeding school programs, and flexible car and house loans. The study therefore recommends that the government must put into consideration the consequences of their policies on students before disseminating them, and at such, must roll out palliatives that must cushion the harsh effects of subsidy removal on students in order to avoid a serious social and moral crisis that is imminent.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a very crucial part of human existence and growth, without which man's growth will not be complete. It has been explained as a key to self-reliance, independence, and freedom, which shapes individuals, communities, and societies. Aregbesola (2023) defined education as that which is pivotal as an instrument for social, political, economic, and all-around development. Sujana (2021), in another prism, defined education as a social institution through

which society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning, skills, and cultural norms. It is pertinent to understand that education is an inseparable part of human life, without which human life is incomplete. The importance of education includes its place as a tool for social development that is essential to promote change and development in society; its ability to improve the economic condition of the people, and its general role that is fundamental in enhancing the quality of human life (United Nations, 2022).

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In Nigeria, formal education plays an important role in shaping human development and human destiny, as it provides people with the opportunity to learn, re-learn, and un-learn for the purpose of becoming a better person. It is even safe to say that formal education is the most dominant type of education in this clime, as the majority of people who acquired education went through the formal education setting in Nigeria. Formal education is the form of education that takes place in a formal setting of a school, where a person learns basic, academic, or other skills. This type of education goes through the stages of nursery school, though it is argued to start officially in primary school, through to secondary school, and to tertiary education accomplished under a curriculum, rules, regulations, and set out guidelines (Ghandi, 2018). It is pertinent to note that formal education is characterized by its scheduled fees, chronological grading systems, and syllabus, taught by teachers and is planned and deliberate (Aysh, 2019).

Higher education is the highest echelon of formal education, which primarily involves teaching, research, and applied knowledge, including teaching for both college students pursuing an NCE certificate and undergraduate degree students. The category of schools that fall under this includes polytechnics, colleges of education, monotechnics, and Universities.

Despite the place of college education in the country, the government has continued to churn out and promulgate policies that affect the students' engagement in their academic education and also take a toll on their academic performance. One such policy in recent times is the fuel subsidy removal, which has had immediate negative consequences on the people in general and the academia in particular.

Fuel subsidy removal is the process of ending government financial assistance for citizens' fuel usage, causing prices to rise to market levels, and this usually leads to a hike in the pump price of fuel with significant economic and social consequences (Akinnibi, 2023). The impact this removal of fuel subsidy in the country has had on the populace is significant because this is the first time since the return of democracy

that the removal is sustained (Felix, 2023). Ogunnode and Aregbesola (2023) observed that since the new president of Nigeria pledged full liberalization of the downstream sector, fuel prices have increased massively, and so have the costs of food, transportation, and other important commodities that people use. Thus, this removal has affected college students' academic engagements in diverse ways.

Nonetheless, the removal of subsidies has affected college of education students' engagement in such forms as poor school administration as a result of an increase in gasoline, teaching programs, learning programs, school supervisions, and students' overall attendance to their academic activities (Ogunnode and Aregbesola, 2023). Habila (2023) posits that this fuel subsidy removal policy has led to hyperinflation within and outside their school premises and is now causing many students to drop out of school as they struggle to meet their academic obligations. In chemistry laboratory, consumables, chemicals, and other reagents prices also soar as a result of fuel subsidy removal in the country (Okwa et al., 2024)

First was the floating of the naira in the foreign exchange market, which helped to cause a sharp increase in commodities across the country, given that Nigeria is an important dependent country. Oleju (2023) posits that, expectedly, the combined effect of the fuel subsidy, which triggered the unification of the naira exchange in the foreign exchange, has expectedly transportation costs, and has skyrocketed with food prices reaching an all-time high in the country, and transport fares have increased by over 100% increase across all routes. Thus, the increment in fuel and naira exchange has a biting effect on the students across all factors, and has an enormous effect on their academic life.

Hitato (2023) notes that the removal of fuel subsidy has brought about economic hardships for students, and this has had a very significant effect on them; for instance, many universities such as Lagos state university have increased their school fees from 16000 naira to 109,000 due to the fuel subsidy removal as they



find means to have enough funds to manage the college logistics. Adebisi, 2023, and Raifu and Afolabi, 2024 reported that, in Lagos state university, students have been complaining that their upkeep money has been eroded by the rising cost of food items and transportation, causing some of them to go hungry at some point; at the same time, the cost of accommodation has also increased as landlords of students' hostels were beginning to increase the hostel rents.

At the University of Ife, which is the premier university in Nigeria, it was reported that many students reverted from the use of the tricycle to the use of their foot, and this was done because the students were trying their very best to manage cost- at this time, students who have issues with trekking under the sun had no other option than to trek under the sun (UI Report, 2023). All these have a direct consequence on the academic performance of the students, as some of them now go hungry to study, while some now prefer to trek to their lecture halls, thereby coming late to classes and subsequently failing their classwork and examinations.

More so, with the loss of interest by the students to academic activities due to lack of food and money occasioned by subsidy removal, the students are now prone to crime such as cultism that has become rampant, rape and other immoral acts from the students as they find easy means to make money to augment the little their parents give them which is now not enough due to subsidy removal (Ake, 2023).

The implication of subjecting the students to such hardship is enormous, considering that in some colleges of education today, some students are the ones catering for themselves due to paucity of funds at home or the death of parents (Okeke, 2023). Thus, this situation of hardship comes with a whole lot of psychological breakdowns for them, and pushes some of them into hustling for more hours to make money, thereby leaving their academics to suffer, which leads to a mixture of poor results, absenteeism from classes, lack of adequate sleep that leads to depression, and extreme cases suicide (Obidah, 2023). All these are the direct means through which fuel subsidy removal directly

affects college students in the country; yet, there are other indirect ways it still affects their academic performances.

Another means through which fuel subsidy affects the colleges of education is the teaching program, which is on the side of the teachers. Since the increment in the pump price of fuel without an increment in college of education lecturers' salaries, most of them have shown laxity in their teaching efforts, as some can no longer cope with the cost of transportation to school and back (Aregbesola, 2023). The implication of this poor attitude of teachers to their teaching responsibility has a serious impact on the students' learning, as some of the students are taught little of their curriculum and are prone to failing their exams, and will even be poor at the practice of their learned courses when they graduate. On a wider scale, fuel subsidy removal will contribute to churning out half-baked graduates, given that the lecturers are now barely available to teach the college students.

Again, due to fuel subsidy removal, colleges have reduced their logistics support by fueling their power-generating sets to power laboratories for students use. A survey across some colleges and universities in some parts of the country indicates that computer laboratories, engineering laboratories, chemistry and physics laboratories, among others, are barely functional across the country since the removal of the subsidy on fuel (Ekundayo, 2023). The reason attributed to it is that the budget for gasoline and fuel for these laboratories can no longer fund it, and this has led to the cancellation of students' lab schedules for courses where laboratory practice is most important and is compulsory.

The paucity of funds to operate the labs due to subsidy have grave consequences for the students in particular and the wider society at large, due to the nature of graduates that will be out in the society in few years and what it implies for the citizens- that is a situation where a medical practitioner is not grounded in practical courses and nurses as well not well grounded in practical's which is the fundamentals of their practice; this will increase Nigeria death rate which is already

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worsening and among the highest in the continent (Ojo, 2023).

In recent times, there have been increased cases of cyber fraud, other internet-related activities around finances, rape, and cohabitation among students in colleges and Universities (Ake, 2023). While the preponderance of these socially and morally bankrupt behaviors is generally among the younger generations, there is a serious correlation between the prevalence of it to the recent fuel subsidy removal in the country, which has had a very harsh economic implication. Ogaraku (2023) posits that students who before now does not indulge in the moral acts of cohabiting with their fellow students are now deeply in the act because majority of the female students are now finding a means to survive in the college environment; again, others who are looking for economic cushion outside the college go out to meet male folks in hotels and guest houses outside the school compound.

The implication of such behavior, Ogunnode and Aregbesola (2023) argue, is that students are at risk of having an unwanted pregnancy, which will directly lead to the stoppage of their academic activities and failure of their exams, as it is almost impossible to cope with pregnancy as young teenage girls in the school. On the other hand, the male folks have now enmeshed themselves in the acts of Internet fraud in the face of subsidy removal, according to National Bureau of Statistics (2023), over 200 tertiary education students in the country have been arrested between May to November 2023, which is the period when the fuel subsidy was removed; such acts by the students that engage in them will lead them to taking their academic activities very unserious and finally result to failure as well.

However, despite the challenges of fuel subsidy removal in the current dispensations, it is pertinent to posit that it has come with diverse challenges for the students and the society at large, yet little or no empirical efforts have been made to evaluate these consequences on the college students. This gap in the literature necessitates this study.

However, there might be some interventions in this regard if the government pays attention and makes efforts to increase college subventions and also attract international bodies to fund some courses in the college; it is only through this way that college education will likely be able to circumvent the challenges associated with fuel subsidy removal.

However, despite the challenges of fuel subsidy removal in the current dispensations, it is pertinent to posit that it has come with diverse challenges for the students and the society at large, yet little or no empirical efforts have been made to evaluate these consequences on the college of education students. This gap in the literature necessitates this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What is the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the academic performance of Chemistry Students in Northwest Colleges of Education?
2. What are the possible ways to alleviate the impact made by Fuel Subsidy removal on the academic performance of Chemistry Students in the Northwest Colleges of Education of Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study comprised 1520 regular NCE students from 9 public colleges of education in the North-west of Nigeria. To obtain 3 out of the 9 public colleges of education in the region, a simple random sampling technique was employed. Then purposive sampling was used to obtain all the NCE III students from each of the 3 colleges of education under study. Finally, simple random sampling was used to obtain 50 students in each of the 3 sampled levels to give rise to 150 NCE III students.

To establish the reliability of the instrument, a trial testing method was used on 30 students of Federal College of Education, Zuba, Abuja, which was outside the study area. The



reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha for each of the subsections. At the end of the analysis, the scores obtained were 0.83 for effects of effects of fuel subsidy removal on the academic performance of college of education students in the north-west and 0.81 for the possible factors that could mitigate the effects of fuel subsidy removal on students' academic performance.

The results showed high reliability of the instrument. The instrument has two parts, A and B. Part A sought information on the respondents. Part B sought information required to answer the research questions. It has 1 & 2, and these were concerned with information regarding research questions one and two. Part A and Part B contains 5 items each, making a total of 10 items. The five-point response mode of strongly Agreed (SA = 5 points), Agree (A = 4 points), Undecided (3), Disagree (D = 2 points), and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1 point) was adopted in the study.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researchers with the help

of 3 research assistants, who helped in administering the questionnaire in the 3 colleges of education. Administration of the questionnaire was done during the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic session. All copies of the questionnaire distributed were collected because of the spot delivery method and the collection technique applied. Mean was used to analyze the data. The five-point response mode used informed the use of a mean of 2.50 as the cut-off point for the decision. The decision rule was that mean scores of items of 2.50 and above were regarded as positive, while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as negative.

RESULTS

Research Question One:

What is the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the academic performance of NCE Chemistry Students in Northwest Colleges of Education?

Table1: The impact of fuel subsidy removal on the academic performance of NCE Chemistry Students

S.N.	Items	X	Decision
1	Hardship caused by the removal of fuel subsidy led to poor teaching attitudes by our lecturers.	3.16	Agreed
2	I experienced a price increase in educational stationery.	3.19	Agreed
3	I faced limited access to educational resources after the fuel subsidy removal.	3.00	Agreed
4	Our level of anxiety increased as a result of fuel subsidy removal.	2.90	Agreed
5	I could not attend lectures regularly due to the hardship caused by the fuel subsidy removal.	2.97	Agreed
	Mean	3.04	

Data in Table 1 showed that respondents agreed with the items with a mean score above 2.50. Stated clearly, the cluster mean of 3.04 indicates that respondents agreed to the fact that removal of fuel subsidy has numerous negative effects on college of education students in north-west and the effects include lack of adequate funds to manage the universities, increase in naira exchange in FX market, poor academic results from students, lack of interest by teaching staffs, lack of interest in learning by

students, rape, untimely death by cohabitation, unwanted pregnancy, cyber fraud, poor pay for lecturers and lack of research funding for lecturers.

Research Question Two:

What are the possible ways to alleviate the impact made by Fuel Subsidy removal on the academic performance of Chemistry Students in the Northwest Colleges of Education of Nigeria?

Table 2: The possible ways to alleviate the impact made by Fuel Subsidy removal on the academic performance of Chemistry Students

S.N.	Items	X	Decision
1	Students should have easy access to educational loans, like the Nigeria Education Loan Fund (NELFUND).	2.86	Agreed
2	The government should increase welfare packages for our lecturers.	3.11	Agreed
3	Government school feeding programmes should be extended to colleges of education.	2.52	Agreed
4	Counseling sessions should be introduced to reduce the level of anxiety caused by the fuel subsidy removal, among chemistry students in the colleges of education.	2.63	Agreed
5	The government should provide grants to Lecturers and students to curtail the poverty caused as a result of fuel subsidy removal.	2.95	Agreed
	Mean	2.81	

Data in Table 2 showed that respondents agreed with the items with a mean score above 2.5. Stated clearly, the cluster mean of 2.81 indicates that respondents agreed to the fact that there are possible ways to mitigate the effects of removal of fuel subsidy on college students, and the means to do that include by increasing lecturers pay, introducing student loan, making accessible research grants, introducing free education in Nigeria colleges of education, introducing free transportation in universities, introducing free feeding school programs, and flexible car and house loans.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data collected for this study were analyzed and interpreted, and the following findings were made. Removal of fuel Subsidy has caused a negative effect on college students, and such negative effects include inadequate funds to manage the colleges, peanut salaries for the lecturers and insufficient research funding for lecturers- the important of these findings is that there was a noticeable low turn-out by the students who are attending classes and participating in general school activities, and as well the lecturers whose salary have not been increased could not possibly pay for journal papers in USD; all these reduced the academic performance of college students;

A study by Ogunode et al (2023) supports this finding were they found that fuel subsidy removal increase the cost of running

schools, affected teaching program, learning program and reduce school supervision activities in Nigerian educational institutions. Poor academic results from students, lack of interest by teaching staff; a study by Okpe et al (2023) supports this finding, as their own study found that college of education lecturers are facing financial difficulties after the removal of fuel subsidies, more than their counterparts in the universities. More so, the study also revealed that the college of education lecturers did not receive any financial incentives during and after the fuel subsidy removal, which caused a lack of interest in teaching by lecturers.

Lack of interest in learning by students due to hunger, rape, untimely death by cohabitation, unwanted pregnancy, cyber fraud were all part of the pointers to the effect of the new economic realities in the country, as students who cannot cope with the new economic realities either dropped out or took to other vices; these findings are in agreement with that of Umeji and Eleanya (2021) that found that in the removal of fuel subsidy, the students will suffer more in the form of higher transport fare and increased price of food items and other commodities. More so, Sani (2023) further found that the removal of fuel subsidy has made more students vulnerable to rape, and cohabitation as they find means to survive the sudden hardship, while Fatima (2023), among others, found that young boys have now resorted to internet fraud and illicit means to get



money to coo; the hardship of fuel subsidy removal.

An increase in naira exchanged in the market, which led to increased hardship in all sectors, was also found to be the effect of fuel subsidy. Oleju (2023) also supports this finding was the study found that the unification of dollar and fuel subsidy removal contributed to all-around hardships on students' academic performance.

More so, it was also found that there are possible ways to mitigate these negative effects of fuel subsidy removal on college students in the north-west, and these ways include increasing lecturers' pay, flexible car and house loans and making accessible research grants; Studies of Beaton and Clarke (2016) also identified increase in Lecturers remuneration as one of how federal government can ameliorate the effects of fuel subsidy removal in the academic sector, to avoid drop in teaching standard, more so, Layode-Kowo (2023) also found that increment in the salary of tertiary institution teachers and introduction of flexible loans for cars and houses will help cushion the economic effects of the subsidy on them, and help not to decrease their attrition attitude.

More so, introducing student loan, introducing free education in Nigeria colleges of education, and free transportation in colleges were all found to be ways to mitigate such; studies have however concurred with this finding as Ake (2023) found that federal government willingness to introduce student loans and free transportation are means in which federal government deployed to reduce the negative effects of fuel subsidy removal on the student academic activities. Introducing free feeding school programs; another study by Adinnu (2023) found the introduction of free food programs across the college of education as one of the ways to curb the effects of fuel subsidy, like cohabitation, unwanted pregnancy, crime-like internet fraud, and other hunger-induced problems.

CONCLUSION

The removal of fuel subsidy no doubt has terrible consequences across all sectors. However, among all the sectors, the education sector, which is the building block of every nation,

has had received a very big blow of it. Based on the available data found that fuel Subsidy removal has a very negative effect on college of education students, and such negative effects include lack of adequate funds to manage the universities, poor pay for lecturers and lack of research funding for lecturers and also it was found that there are possible ways to mitigate these negative effects of fuel subsidy removal on college of education students in South-East and these ways include-by increasing lecturers pay, flexible car and house loans.

And making research grants accessible. From the findings made herein, the study concludes that the college education in Nigeria have had it very difficult to grapple with the negative effect of the fuel subsidy removal, and the group of people who are at the receiving end of it are primarily the tertiary education students, especially NCE students as many have had to resort to socially dangerous lifestyle and morally decayed acts to sustain their stay in the campus. While the statement above is the current reality, one can say that it has vast consequences if not properly addressed by the government, as the education culture will be severely affected, while the next generation of leaders will not emerge.

This may lead to serious socio-economic and political costs capable of drawing the nation's development backward. Thus, the social and moral outcomes of these present realities in the economy could be addressed by orienting the students on the need to adjust to the economic realities and manage properly the palliatives provided by the government; it is through this that the students will be able to avoid social and moral temptations brought about by this hardship.

Implication for the Study

Study of this kind is naturally quite imperious, assumed that if it is not done, the educational sector of the country will suffer continuously, given the multi-faceted negative costs occasioned by the removal of fuel subsidy. As such, this study is very useful and timely to identify the noticeable consequences of the fuel subsidy removal on the students and look for a



way out to solve the issues; this is because if the issues are not tackled immediately, they will contribute significantly to the already existing challenges in Nigerian colleges of education.

More so, the government will have empirical data on this instead of speculation, and it is expected that this study will compel the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and Humanitarian Affairs to immediately swing into action to rescue this situation; failure to will lead to a very serious socio, education and moral decay in the society due to fuel subsidy removal. On the premise of this, this present study is very germane and timely.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The federal government should give out palliatives to lecturers that will help to cushion the effects of removal of fuel subsidy on college lecturers; by this, the government should as well plan out financial support and food palliatives for students in the tertiary institutions, especially colleges as a means of supporting them in the era of severe economic meltdown.
2. The government should introduce free or cheap transport fare buses and other means of transportation for students to cut the cost of movements to and from the campuses, which has become a one of the main reasons students dodge lectures. This could also be attained by donating buses to colleges to provide a ride to and from for students attending lectures in the colleges.
3. The government should either implement school feeding program or open cheaper essential commodities inside the colleges campuses, where students can get subsidies on food and groceries.
4. Increase in overhead cost of managing the institutions may help them to be able to fund infrastructures like laboratories and workshops, as well as consumables

in chemical laboratories, that students use for learning. This can be attained by reviewing the budgetary allocation of the education budget for colleges of education to have enough funds to navigate the present economic realities caused by the removal of fuel subsidy.

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