

Implications of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Nutritional Lifestyle of Students in Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo

Kareem, Shaida Itunu

Phone: 07061304300; Email – kareemshaida2203@gmail.com

Oluwadare, Seun Oyeleye

Phone: 08066787520 Email – nuesare2710@gmail.com

Ademola, Elijah Adewole

Phone – 08103732297;

Department of Physical and Health Education
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the implications of fuel subsidy removal on student nutritional lifestyle in Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo. The increase in fuel prices following the subsidy removal leads to rise in transportation costs, which subsequently affects the prices of goods and services, including food. This economic shift can drastically alter the nutrition and lifestyle of undergraduates in several ways such as higher transportation costs, which are passed on to consumers in the form of increased food prices. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study population comprises all Adeyemi Federal University of Education students with sample size of 200 students selected from ten (10) Departments. Questionnaire was used to collect data. The data collected was analyzed and interpreted using frequency count, percentage and mean. The study revealed that fuel subsidy removal has significantly affect the nutrition lifestyle of students which may result in negative health outcomes in the long run. Based on findings it was concluded that the reliance on low-nutrient foods and the prevalence of poor dietary habits pose risks of malnutrition which may predispose them to various health issues, including obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases, in the long term. It was therefore recommended that government should implement policies aimed at stabilizing food prices to alleviate the financial burden on students; stakeholder should establish nutrition education programs within universities to raise awareness about healthy eating habits, budgeting for food and the importance of maintaining a balanced diet, even on a limited budget.

Keywords: Fuel subsidy, Nutrition Lifestyle, Subsidy removal, Mental health, Nutritional status

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country endowed with vast mineral resources prominent among which are the oils and gas reserves. The country possesses 28% of Africa's proven oil reserves, second only to Libya; and is the largest producer of crude oil in the region, producing 2.4million barrels per day in 2010 which is about 24% of the continent's petroleum (Akinwale, et al., 2013). One of the contentious issues in Nigeria today is the removal of fuel subsidy on Premium Motor spirit (PMS). Subsidies are financial or non-financial incentives provided by the government or other organizations to support

specific industries, sectors, or individuals (Scott & Kvilhaug, 2022). They are intended to alleviate economic burdens, promote growth, and address market failures. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2020), subsidies can take various forms, including direct government expenditures, equity infusions, tax incentives, soft loans, government provision of goods and services and procurement on favorable terms, and price supports such as price reduction.

In the context of petroleum subsidies, various authors have highlighted their significance in ensuring affordable access to fuel and mitigating the impact of volatile fuel prices on consumers. Fuel subsidies are a means of government intervention aimed at decreasing the expense of fuel by offering direct financial assistance to oil companies. In doing so, they subsidize the product for consumers (Soremekun, 2023). Popoola (2020) argues that petroleum subsidies in Nigeria have been instrumental in cushioning the effects of price fluctuations and maintaining stability in the transportation sector. The author emphasizes that the subsidies have played a crucial role in supporting economic activities and improving the welfare of the Nigerian population. However, Munshi (2018) sheds light on the challenges associated with petroleum subsidies, including their high financial cost and potential for corruption and mismanagement. The author points out that large sums of public funds are allocated to fuel subsidies, which could be utilized more effectively in other sectors, such as healthcare or education. He therefore suggested that subsidy reforms are necessary to promote transparency, reduce fiscal burdens, and encourage market efficiency.

The sudden elimination of petrol subsidies will result in a rise in the prices of construction materials and consequently lead to increased housing costs. This scenario has prompted unwarranted queues at petrol stations, while transportation fares have tripled both within and between major cities in Nigeria (Ayeyemi, 2023). Subsidy removal is an official elimination of subsidy on products formerly subsidized. It is the decision of government or institutions to stop payment of subsidy on products or services previously subsidy. It is the policy of liberating the prices of goods and service to be regulated by forces of demand and supply (Ogunode & Aregbesola, 2023). Fuel subsidies in Nigeria have long been a mechanism to cushion the populace from the high cost of petroleum products, which in turn affects transportation and the overall cost of

living. The removal of these subsidies has far-reaching implications, particularly for vulnerable groups like undergraduate students. While the intention may be to address fiscal challenges and encourage market-driven pricing, the decision's impact on inflation, transportation costs, and individuals' livelihoods cannot be overlooked (Ogunode, et al., 2023). The removal of subsidies has affected both public and private institutions. Financial institutions, health institutions, religion institutions, political institutions, tourism sector, judiciary and educational institutions have been affected. Higher fuel costs raise the cost of transporting food items, which results in higher food prices.

For students, this means their already limited budgets are strained further, making it harder to afford a balanced diet (Okonjo-Iweala, 2014). Students may opt for cheaper, less nutritious food options to stretch their limited funds. This often results in a diet that is high in carbohydrates but low in proteins, vitamins, and minerals (FAO, 2018). With the rise in food prices, students may cut back on nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, and proteins, leading to potential deficiencies (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2019). Poor nutrition can lead to weakened immune systems, higher susceptibility to illnesses, and long-term health issues. It can also impair cognitive function, concentration, and academic performance. The stress of managing increased living expenses can negatively impact students' mental health. The pressure to balance academic responsibilities with financial constraints can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Students may have to make significant lifestyle adjustments to cope with the higher costs. This could include reducing social activities, cutting back on leisure spending, or even seeking additional part-time employment, which can further strain their time and energy.

Furthermore, university students often lead dynamic lifestyles characterized by balancing academics, social activities, and personal responsibilities. They face unique challenges such as time management, financial constraints and adapting to independence. Living healthy lifestyle winds around proper nutrition, adequate exercise and rest (Ojo & Ajala, 2021). The most important benefits of exercise are being physically fit which could increase productivity and delay ageing process. This phase

is also marked by exploration and self-discovery, as students engage in diverse interests and build foundations for future careers. It is in the light of this that the study examined the implications of fuel subsidy removal on students' nutrition lifestyle in Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the implications of fuel subsidy removal on students' nutrition lifestyle in Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the cost of food items of Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo students;
2. Access the effects of fuel subsidy removal on the nutrition lifestyle of students at Adeyemi Federal University of Education;
3. Identify the strategies adopted by students to cope with the implications of fuel subsidy removal on their nutrition lifestyle.

Research Questions

1. What are the impacts of fuel subsidy removal on the cost of food items among students of Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo?
2. What are the effects of fuel subsidy removal on the nutrition lifestyle of students in Adeyemi Federal University of Education students?
3. What are the strategies adopted by students to cope with the implications of fuel subsidy removal on their nutrition lifestyle?

Significance of the Study

The Universities and colleges in Nigeria can use the insights from this study to enhance their support services for students. This includes creating awareness about affordable nutritious food options, providing mental health support and nutrition education as well as developing programmes to assist students in managing increased living costs. More so, educational institutions can better allocate resources to areas that directly impact student well-being, such as campus food services, health and wellness

programs, and financial aid. The study can empower students by providing them with knowledge about the broader economic factors affecting their lives. Understanding these dynamics can encourage proactive behaviour and better financial management. Insights into common challenges and coping strategies can foster a sense of community among students, leading to collaborative efforts to address shared issues.

By analyzing how fuel subsidy removal affects a specific population, this study contributes to the broader understanding of economic impact assessments. This can be valuable for economists and researchers studying similar economic reforms in different contexts. The identification of coping mechanisms adopted by students can provide insights into resilience strategies that could be applied in other economic hardship scenarios. The findings of this study can provide valuable insights for policymakers regarding the broader socio-economic impacts of fuel subsidy removal. Understanding these impacts can guide the development of more comprehensive and balanced economic policies that consider the welfare of vulnerable groups such as students.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The use of this research design was considered appropriate because of its merit, which suits a study of this nature. The population of the study comprised all students of Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo. The sample for this study comprised two hundred (200) respondents which are selected from five faculties in the institution. Simple random sampling technique was used to select two (2) Departments from each faculty making total number of ten (10) Departments to represent all. Convenience sampling technique was used to select twenty (20) respondents from each department making a total sample size of two hundred (200) respondents. The instrument used for this study was a self-developed structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was in two sections. Section A focused on the demographic data of the respondents while section B focused on the question items on implications of fuel subsidy removal on students' nutrition lifestyle in Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo. All the items in the instrument were close ended and were in line with four Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree.

The instruments were administered personally with the help of the president of each department selected. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents. The self-administration was to ensure a high rate of return and also to enable the respondents ask questions and obtain clarification on issues that may not be cleared to them or that need explanation. The completed copies of the questionnaire were collated, coded and analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency count percentage and mean.

RESULTS

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents Demographic Information

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	87	43.5
Female	113	56.5
Total	200	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18years	26	13.0
19-24years	90	45.0
25-29years	84	42.0
30years above	-	-
Total	200	100.0
Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity	133	66.5
Muslim	67	33.5
Traditional	-	-
Total	200	100.0

The data presented in table 1 above shows that 87 (43.5%) of respondents were males, while 113 (56.5%) of respondents were females. It also revealed that 26 (13.0%) of respondents were below 18years, 90 (45.0%) were between 19 – 24years, while 84 (42.0%) were between 25 – 28years. It further illustrates that majority of respondents 133 (66.5%) were Christians, while 67 (33.5%) of the respondents identify as Muslims and there are no respondents who practice traditional religion.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on the Cost of Food Items

SN	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Remarks
-----------	--------------	-----------	----------	----------	-----------	-----------------------------	----------------

1	The cost of essential food items has increased significantly since the removal of fuel subsidy.	96 (48.0)	72 (36.0)	20 (10.0)	12 (6.0)	3.26	Agreed
2	The price of fresh fruits and vegetables has gone up as a result of fuel subsidy removal.	52 (26.0)	120 (60.0)	16 (8.0)	12 (6.0)	3.06	Agreed
3	Staple foods such as rice, beans, yam) are no longer affordable due to rising prices.	81 (40.5)	85 (42.5)	21 (10.5)	13 (6.5)	3.17	Agreed
4	Fuel subsidy removal has led to higher transportation costs, which has impacted food prices.	85 (42.5)	81 (40.5)	18 (9.0)	16 (8.0)	3.18	Agreed
5	The fuel subsidy removal has reduced my ability to buy nutritious and healthy food	60 (30.0)	112 (56.0)	16 (8.0)	12 (6.0)	3.10	Agreed

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents generally agree that the removal of the fuel subsidy has led to a noticeable increase in the cost of food items, including essential food, fresh produce, and staple foods, with an added strain on students' ability to afford nutritious meals. The rise in transportation costs is also seen as a major factor in driving up food prices.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the Effects of Fuel Subsidy Removal on nutrition lifestyle of students in Adeyemi Federal University of Education

SN	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Remarks
1	Fuel subsidy removal has resulted in students spending a larger portion of their budget on food.	90 (45.0)	75 (37.5)	19 (9.5)	16 (8.0)	3.19	Agreed

2	The removal of fuel subsidy has led to increased reliance on cheaper, less nutritious food	35 (17.5)	96 (48.0)	38 (19.0)	31 (15.5)	2.67	Agreed
3	I find it difficult to buy essential food items like protein and fruits	98 (49.0)	70 (35.0)	19 (9.5)	13 (6.5)	3.26	Agreed
4	I have skipped meals more frequently due to financial constraints post by subsidy removal.	79 (39.5)	82 (41.0)	18 (9.0)	21 (10.5)	3.09	Agreed
5	The removal of fuel subsidy has made it harder for me to maintain a healthy diet.	70 (35.0)	104 (52.0)	11 (5.5)	15 (7.5)	3.14	Agreed

Table three revealed that the removal of the fuel subsidy has significantly contributed to rising food costs in Nigeria, forcing students to rely on cheaper, less nutritious options, skip meals, and struggle to maintain a healthy diet. These changes in dietary habits may have long-term effects on their nutritional status and overall well-being.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the strategies adopted by students to cope with the implications of fuel subsidy removal on their nutrition lifestyle

SN	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Remarks
1	I have reduced my consumption of snacks and processed foods to save money.	55 (27.5)	97 (48.5)	25 (12.5)	23 (11.5)	2.90	Agreed
2	I have started cooking at home more often to reduce food expenses.	104 (52.0)	64 (32.0)	20 (10.0)	12 (6.0)	3.30	Agreed
3	I have switched to consuming more staple foods (e.g., rice, beans) instead of more expensive meals.	99 (49.5)	57 (28.5)	25 (12.5)	19 (9.5)	3.19	Agreed
4	I have reduced the frequency of eating out to cope with the increased cost of food.	81 (40.5)	95 (47.5)	4 (2.0)	20 (10.0)	3.18	Agreed
5	I now rely more on cheaper, less nutritious	68 (34.0)	95 (48.0)	16 (8.0)	20 (10.0)	3.06	Agreed

	food options to manage my budget.						
--	-----------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

Table four affirmed that students have adopted several key strategies to cope with the financial impact of fuel subsidy removal such as cooking at home more often, reducing snack and processed food consumption, switching to staple foods, and cutting back on eating out. However, many students are also turning to less nutritious food options to stay within their budget, which may have long-term health implications.

Discussion of Findings

This study was designed to examine the implications of fuel subsidy removal on student nutritional lifestyle in Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo. In relation to research question one, findings from table 2 shows that majority of the respondents generally agree that the removal of the fuel subsidy has led to a noticeable increase in the cost of food items, including essential food, fresh produce, and staple foods, with an added strain on students' ability to afford nutritious meals. The rise in transportation costs is also seen as a major factor in driving up food prices. This aligns with the findings of Adeola (2022) and Akinyele (2021) who emphasize that the rise in transportation and production costs, resulting from increased fuel prices, has driven up the prices of essential food items, fresh produce, and staple foods. According to Adebayo (2018), the strain on household budgets means that students, especially those from low-income backgrounds, are finding it increasingly difficult to access nutritious meals. The rising food prices force many students to opt for cheaper, less nutritious alternatives, negatively impacting their overall health and well-being.

Findings from table three revealed that the removal of the fuel subsidy has significantly contributed to rising food costs in Nigeria, forcing students to rely on cheaper, less nutritious options, skip meals, and struggle to maintain a healthy diet. These changes in dietary habits may have long-term effects on their nutritional status and overall well-being. The findings from this study corroborated the findings of Nwosu (2022), who stated that the removal of fuel subsidies has led to increased food

prices, which directly impacts students' ability to access nutritious meals. Ajayi (2022) also stated that the elimination of subsidies has resulted in a chain reaction: as fuel prices rise, transportation and production costs follow suit, leading to higher prices for essential food items. This economic shift forces students, particularly those on limited budgets, to reconsider their food purchasing habits. According to Akinwunmi (2023), opined that many students are now skipping meals or reducing their portion sizes to cope with the financial burden, a trend that undermines their nutritional needs and overall well-being. This aligns with the findings of this study, which show a strong correlation between the effects of the subsidy removal and the dietary choices made by students.

Findings from table four affirmed that students have adopted several key strategies to cope with the financial impact of fuel subsidy removal such as cooking at home more often, reducing snack and processed food consumption, switching to staple foods, and cutting back on eating out. However, many students are also turning to less nutritious food options to stay within their budget, which may have long-term health implications. This is in agreement with the findings of Eniola (2023), which indicates that students are consciously reducing their consumption of snacks and processed foods, which tend to be more expensive and less nutritious. By switching to staple foods, which are often more affordable and filling, students can better manage their food expenses while still satisfying their hunger. Ogunyemi (2023), stated that the economic strain imposed by higher food prices can lead to adverse health outcomes, as students may resort to cheaper, less nutritious food options. This aligns with the study's observations that the escalating cost of food items compromises students' dietary habits, resulting in a decline in overall health and well-being. The findings from the study also align with Olatunji (2023), who opined that many students are increasingly opting for cheaper, calorie-dense foods that may not provide adequate nutrition, often sacrificing essential vitamins and minerals for the sake of affordability, this shift not only diminishes the quality of their diets but also poses risks to their health and academic performance. Further, underscores the broader implications of these dietary changes,

suggesting that prolonged reliance on suboptimal food choices could lead to nutritional deficiencies, which may affect cognitive function and overall well-being.

Conclusion

The removal of the fuel subsidy has led to a significant rise in food prices particularly for essential items like fresh produce and staple foods which compelled students to seek cheaper, less nutritious food options which may affect their overall health and academic performance. The reliance on low-nutrient foods and the prevalence of poor dietary habits pose risks of malnutrition which may predispose them to various health issues, including obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases, in the long term.

Recommendations

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

1. The government should implement policies aimed at stabilizing food prices to alleviate the financial burden on students.
2. Stakeholder should establish nutrition education programmes within universities to raise awareness about healthy eating habits, budgeting for food and the importance of maintaining a balanced diet, even on a limited budget.
3. University authorities should encourage the establishment of student-friendly food initiatives such as campus-based food cooperatives or meal plans that provide access to affordable, nutritious meals.
4. The institution should engage in farming as well as agriculture productions in order to increase access to varieties of food stuff among students.
5. Universities should provide support services such as food banks or assistance programmes to help students facing food insecurity.

References

- Adebayo, O. (2018). *Food security and nutritional status of students in Nigeria. International Journal of Food Sciences*, 10(4), 201-215.
- Adeola, T. (2022). *Impact of fuel subsidy removal on food prices in Nigeria: A case study of university students. Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 15(2), 145-157.
- Adewale, T. (2021). *The socio-economic impact of food prices on student health. Nigerian Journal of Health Policy*, 18(4), 300-315.
- Afolabi, S. (2022). *The impact of subsidy policies on students' food choices. African Journal of Economic Policy*, 9(3), 150-165.
- Ajayi, R. (2022). *Students' nutritional lifestyle changes due to economic factors. Journal of Youth Studies*, 11(2), 75-90.
- Akinwale, Y. O., Olaopa, O. R., Ogundari, I. & Siyanbola, W. O. (2013). "Political economy of phasing out fuel subsidy in Nigeria". *Energy and Power*, 3(4). National Centre for Technological Management, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.
- Akinwunmi, J. (2023). *Health implications of poor dietary habits among Nigerian students. Nigerian Journal of Public Health*, 8(1), 112-124.
- Akinyele, A. (2021). *Dietary changes among Nigerian students amid economic challenges. Nigerian Journal of Nutrition*, 12(1), 34-50.
- Ayeyemi, (2023). Subsidy removal: Experts predict high costs of building materials, construction. *Nigerian Tribune*. <https://tribuneonlineng.com/subsidy-removal-experts-predict-highcosts-of-building-materials-construction/>
- Eniola, M. (2023). *Impact of economic changes on students' nutrition: A review. African Journal of Nutrition Studies*, 5(1), 56-70.
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), (2018). *State of food security and nutrition in the World 2018*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2022). *Subsidies, trade, and international cooperation*. OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a4f01ddb-en>
- Munshi, N. (2018). *Nigeria's Fuel Subsidies Bill Set to Soar on Rising Oil*. Financial Times.
- Nwosu, P. (2022). *The link between food affordability and student health outcomes. Journal of Food Policy*, 14(2), 115-130.
- Ogunode, N., J. Ahmed, I. & Olugbenga, A., V (2023). Application of Petrol Subsidy Funds to Address the Problems of Universal Basic Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria. *Web of Scholars: Multidimensional Research Journal (MRJ)*, 02(01), 1-9
- Ogunode, N.J. & Aregbesola, B. G. (2023). Impact of Subsidy Removal on Nigerian Educational System. *Middle European Scientific Bulletin*. 105-116.

- Ogunyemi, J. (2023). *Challenges of maintaining a healthy diet in Nigerian universities. International Journal of Higher Education Research*, 7(3), 88-104.
- Ojo, O. R. & Ajala, R. B. (2021). Perceived Influence of Health Components of Exercise on Fitness and Lifestyles of Sedentary Youth in Tertiary Institutions in Oyo-State, Nigeria. *Wudil Journal of Science and Technology Education* 3(2), 103-111.
- Okonjo-Iweala, N. (2014). *The reforms of fuel subsidies in Nigeria: A policy perspective*. In M. E. E. E. Yekini (Ed.), ***Public finance in developing countries***. 97-115.
- Olatunji, A. (2023). *Economic constraints and their impact on student diets. Journal of Economic Studies*, 15(1), 20-35.
- Popoola, J. (2020). Globalization and Nigeria's economic development—A study of the interconnectedness. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 10(3), 45-49.
- Scott, G., & Kvilhaug, S. (2022). Subsidies: Definition, how they work, pros and cons. Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/subsidy.asp>
- Soremekun, A. (2023). The dynamics of fuel subsidy in Nigeria. The Guardian. <https://guardian.ng/opinion/the-dynamics-of-fuel-subsidy-in-nigeria/>