



SUBSIDY GONE, STRUGGLES REMAIN: A MIXED-METHODS INQUIRY INTO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC FALLOUT OF PMS SUBSIDY REMOVAL IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The removal of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) fuel subsidy in Nigeria has generated widespread socio-economic concern, disproportionately affecting local populations. Guided by the Relative Deprivation Theory, this study investigates the localized impact of this policy shift on the socio-economic lives of citizens in Kwara State, Nigeria. Utilizing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the study integrated a cross-sectional survey of 388 respondents with in-depth interviews from five purposively selected key stakeholders. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and t-tests, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. The result revealed that 77% believed subsidy removal was unnecessary, 79.3% rated it a poor decision, and 96% identified corruption as the major barrier to successful subsidy implementation. A paired t-test showed a significant decline in household economic condition (Mean drop: 6.55 to 3.17; $p < 0.001$) and purchasing power (Mean drop: 6.10 to 3.27; $p < 0.001$). One-sample t-tests also confirmed significant increases in cost of transportation ($t = 45.68$; $p < 0.001$), healthcare ($t = 45.68$; $p < 0.001$), and food prices ($t = 49.21$; $p < 0.001$). Qualitative interviews corroborated these trends, with participants unanimously reporting heightened financial hardship, profound distrust in governance, and an absolute absence of effective palliative support. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that the policy has exacerbated urban and rural vulnerability, severely straining the social contract. These insights imply that future macroeconomic reforms must prioritize transparent governance, robust social safety nets and targeted, immediate palliative measures to mitigate public suffering and foster civic trust.

Keywords: Fuel subsidy, Socio-economic impact, Government palliatives, Household welfare

Introduction

Governments around the world, according to Chen (2023), implement subsidy programs as strategic economic interventions aimed at promoting inclusive growth, reducing production and consumption costs, and supporting access to essential services. Developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany provide subsidies across sectors like energy, healthcare, transportation, and agriculture, with the aim of improving welfare and stabilizing markets (Nsude et al., 2025; Olaoye, 2024). These interventions are especially significant in resource-dependent economies where subsidies serve as a cushion against volatility in global commodity prices and domestic economic instability (Sun and Xu, 2024). Despite their intended benefits, fuel subsidies are widely recognized as fiscally burdensome and prone to mismanagement. The International Energy Agency (2019) estimated that global fossil fuel consumption subsidies amounted to 325 billion United States dollars in 2015. These figures are not only higher than the total development assistance offered globally in the same year, but also indicate a disproportionate allocation of public resources. Oladimeji and Umar (2024) emphasized that in many developing countries, the scale of energy subsidies often exceeds bilateral development aid, raising concerns about the opportunity cost of such spending on national development priorities.

In Nigeria, Premium Motor Spirit subsidy has historically accounted for a large portion of the national budget, with significant fiscal implications. Between 2005 and 2020, the government reportedly spent 13.7 trillion naira on petrol subsidies (NEITI, 2023). In 2022 alone, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company allocated 4.39 trillion naira to subsidize PMS consumption (Saka, 2023). However, these subsidies have not effectively reached their intended beneficiaries. Multiple reports have linked the fuel subsidy regime to corruption, diversion of products to neighboring countries, and enrichment of a few powerful actors

within the oil sector, rather than delivering relief to the majority of Nigerians (Sodeeq, 2024; Taiwo et al., 2024).

Following these challenges, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration announced the removal of PMS subsidy on May 29, 2023 (KPMG, 2025). The policy shift was intended to eliminate distortions in the petroleum sector, reduce fiscal deficits, and redirect public funds toward critical sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure. However, the immediate effects of this decision have been far-reaching. The increase in fuel prices has caused a surge in transportation and logistics costs, which has in turn affected the prices of essential goods and services. These effects have placed enormous pressure on household income, increased the cost of living, and deepened the economic vulnerability of low-income populations (Aniemeke, 2024; Oladimeji and Umar, 2024).

The socio-economic consequences have also extended to sectors such as education and small enterprise development. Households have been compelled to adjust spending priorities due to rising energy costs, with many families reporting difficulties in meeting school-related expenses (Sodeeq, 2024). While some businesses are beginning to explore alternatives such as renewable energy, the transition is constrained by inflation and limited access to affordable capital (Nsude et al., 2025; Ismaila and Hassan, 2024). In addition, social instability remains a looming concern, as the removal of fuel subsidies in the past has triggered nationwide protests in response to rising economic hardship (Saka et al., 2023).

Given these developments, this study seeks to assess the implications of fuel subsidy removal on the socio-economic lives of the people in Kwara State, Nigeria. The research specifically aims to determine whether the removal of PMS subsidy was a necessity, investigate its impacts on household welfare and local economic conditions, identify possible policy alternatives to subsidy removal, and examine the effectiveness of the palliative measures introduced by the government. By focusing on these objectives, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on post-subsidy reforms and provides evidence-based

recommendations for policymakers and development practitioners in Nigeria and similar contexts.

Literature Review

To understand the socio-economic dynamics of fuel subsidy removal, this study is anchored on the Distributive Justice Framework and Relative Deprivation Theory. Distributive justice concerns the perceived fairness of how rewards and burdens are distributed within a society. When governments implement sweeping macroeconomic reforms, public acceptance hinges heavily on whether the immediate economic pain is equitably shared or if it disproportionately burdens the vulnerable while shielding political elites. When public expectations of distributive justice are violated, it triggers relative deprivation which is a psychological state where citizens perceive a severe discrepancy between the goods they expect to enjoy (such as subsidized fuel as a dividend of being an oil-producing nation) and what they actually receive. Together, these theories explain why fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria historically triggers immediate public resistance, socio-economic anxiety and a breakdown of the social contract.

Fuel subsidy in Nigeria has remained a contentious fiscal policy since its formal adoption in the 1970s. Initially introduced to cushion the effect of rising global oil prices, the policy gained popularity as a means of making petroleum products affordable for Nigerian citizens. However, successive governments have repeatedly attempted to remove or reform the subsidy due to its rising fiscal burden and perceived inefficiencies. According to Mohammed et al. (2023), the Nigerian government has engaged in multiple rounds of subsidy removal attempts since 1988, each often met with public opposition and political resistance. The most recent and decisive removal was announced by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on May 29, 2023, as part of broader economic reforms aimed at reducing waste and improving fiscal sustainability (Eboh, 2023).

The rationale for subsidy removal in Nigeria often centers on the growing financial strain it places on the federal budget. Over the years, petroleum subsidy payments have consumed significant national resources that could otherwise be directed to critical development sectors. The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative reported that between 2005 and 2020, the government spent over thirteen trillion naira on petrol subsidies (NEITI, 2023). Ozili and Obiora (2023) argue that the removal of the subsidy is expected to free up substantial public funds for investment in infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Usigbe (2023) supports this view by noting that the government's position has been that subsidy payments primarily benefit wealthy individuals and cartels rather than the average Nigerian.

While the economic rationale for removing fuel subsidy appears strong, the social and economic consequences of the policy have been profound. Following the 2023 announcement, Nigerians experienced a sharp increase in fuel prices, which triggered an immediate rise in transportation costs, food prices, and other essential goods and services. Aniemeke (2024) highlights that the increase in energy prices has pushed more Nigerians into poverty, especially those in the informal sector. Oladimeji and Umar (2024) estimate that the poverty rate in Nigeria could rise significantly as a result of subsidy removal. Sodeeq (2024) adds that the education sector has not been spared, as increased operational costs have led to higher school fees, thereby limiting access to education for low-income families.

Moreover, the absence of comprehensive palliative measures has worsened the impact of subsidy removal on vulnerable groups. Although the federal government introduced wage awards and cash transfers to mitigate the economic shock, their delayed implementation and limited coverage have drawn criticism from civil society and organized labor. Taiwo et al. (2024) note that the lack of transparency in the disbursement of these palliatives has further undermined public trust. The Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress have also raised concerns over the exclusion of critical stakeholders in the planning and

implementation stages of the policy, leading to a breakdown in communication and widespread discontent (Premium Times, 2023).

Current research on subsidy reform in Nigeria emphasizes the need for a phased and inclusive approach to economic adjustment. Rabi (2023) argues that while the long-term benefits of subsidy removal may be evident, the immediate hardship faced by ordinary citizens requires deliberate policy interventions. These include targeted social safety programs, transparent allocation of saved funds, and investment in local production to reduce dependence on imported fuel. Kayode and Idera (2025) concludes that without these safeguards, subsidy removal risks exacerbating economic inequality and triggering public unrest. This study builds on the existing literature by examining the implications of subsidy removal on the socio-economic lives of residents in Kwara State, thereby contributing context-specific insights into the ongoing policy debate.

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design. This approach allows the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of research. By integrating a quantitative cross-sectional survey with qualitative in-depth interviews, the design ensures that empirical statistical trends are directly validated and enriched by the lived experiences of the participants. This triangulation provides a comprehensive, multi-dimensional assessment of the localized socio-economic impacts of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) subsidy removal in Kwara State.

Study Area: The study was conducted in Kwara State, located in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The state has an estimated population of 3.45 million people (National Population Commission, 2020). Kwara State is characterized by its rich ethnic diversity, a highly dominant civil service economy, and a strategic geographic position

bridging northern and southern Nigeria. These unique structural and demographic features make it an ideal sub-national case study for evaluating how macroeconomic shocks reverberate across diverse socio-economic groups.

Population of the Study: The target population comprised adult male and female residents of Kwara State who are directly vulnerable to policy shifts in energy pricing. The sampling frame specifically focused on key economic stakeholders whose livelihoods depend heavily on fuel accessibility, including: Civil servants, Traders and informal merchants, Students, Commercial transport operators and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Sample Size: The quantitative sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula for large populations:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = finite population size
- e = margin of error (0.05)

Based on this formula, a baseline sample size of 400 respondents was established. Out of the 400 structured questionnaires administered, 388 were fully completed and returned, yielding a 97% response rate which is statistically robust for social science analysis. A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure geographical representativeness across the state's three senatorial districts:

- **Stage 1 (Purposive/Random Selection):** One Local Government Area (LGA) was selected from each senatorial district to capture distinct demographic variances: Ilorin West (Kwara Central - urban), Baruten (Kwara North - rural/border), and Ifelodun (Kwara South - semi-urban).

- **Stage 2 (Cluster Selection):** Two political wards were randomly selected from each of the three sampled LGAs.
- **Stage 3 (Community Selection):** Two distinct communities were selected from each ward, culminating in twelve (12) study communities.
- **Stage 4 (Random Sampling):** Within these communities, households and individual respondents were randomly selected to participate in the survey.

For the qualitative component, five (5) key informants were purposively selected from the broader sample pool based on their economic sector relevance (e.g., transport union leaders, SME owners) and their availability to participate in comprehensive interviews.

Research Instruments: Data collection relied on two complementary, self-designed instruments:

- **Structured Questionnaire:** Administered to the quantitative sample, featuring closed-ended questions and Likert scales to measure public perception, changes in purchasing power, and household expenditures.
- **In-depth Interview (IDI) Guide:** Administered to the qualitative participants, utilizing open-ended questions to explore nuances of economic hardship, governance distrust, and palliative distribution.

Validity and Reliability: To ensure content and construct validity, the instruments were subjected to rigorous peer and expert review by senior academics and economic policy professionals. Their feedback was integrated to refine question phrasing, remove ambiguities, and align items with the research objectives. For reliability, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on a small, non-sampled segment of the population. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. The test yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.67. While 0.70 is conventionally preferred, a coefficient of 0.67 is statistically acceptable and deemed reliable in exploratory

social science research capturing volatile, real-time public perceptions (Hair et al., 2019; Taber, 2018).

Reliability of the Instruments: To confirm that the questionnaire gives consistent results, the Cronbach Alpha method is used. A value of 0.67 is accepted as a sign that the items in the questionnaire are reliable. A pilot test is carried out to ensure that the questions are easy to understand and relevant to the study.

Data Collection and Administrative Procedures: Quantitative questionnaires were administered in-person by the researcher and trained field assistants to clear up any ambiguities on-site and maximize response accuracy. For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face, digitally recorded with the participants' explicit consent, and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis: In alignment with the convergent parallel design, quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately and then integrated during the discussion phase:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. *Descriptive statistics* (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize demographic profiles and baseline perceptions. *Inferential statistics*, specifically paired t-tests (to measure pre- versus post-subsidy expenditure shifts), one-sample t-tests (to evaluate the significance of commodity price hikes) and cross-tabulations (to explore demographic associations) were executed.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Transcribed interview data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis. Textual data were inductively coded to isolate recurring patterns which were then clustered into overarching themes regarding systemic hardship, institutional palliatives, and civic trust.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' Response Rate

Respondents' response rate shows that, out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 388 of them were returned. This rate of the respondents' response can be said to be impressive, as 388 constitutes 97 percent of 400. In order to choose participants for the interview, a purposeful sampling was utilized to pick 5 willing respondents until data saturation. According to Crossman (2020), purposeful sampling is a kind of non-probability based on purpose as well as characteristics of the population. Only five participants were willing and participated in the interview.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study includes a total of 388 respondents. Out of these, 55 percent are male and 45 percent are female. The majority fall within the age group of 31 to 40 years (30.4 percent), followed by 41 to 50 years (25.7 percent), while those aged 20 to 30 years represent 24.2 percent, and respondents above 50 years make up 19.5 percent. In terms of marital status, 47 percent are married, 35 percent are single, 10.8 percent are divorcees, and 7 percent are widowed. Regarding family size, 32 percent reported having no children, while 13.1 percent have four children, and 15.7 percent declined to state the number of children. With respect to educational background, 47 percent of respondents attained tertiary education, 38 percent completed secondary or Islamic education, 8 percent had primary education, and 6 percent reported no formal education. Occupationally, civil servants account for the largest group at 30 percent, followed by transporters (19 percent), students (16 percent), professionals (11 percent), and farmers (9 percent), while the remaining respondents are involved in skilled and unskilled manual jobs, or are unemployed.

Ethnic composition shows that 49.4 percent are Yoruba, 21.6 percent are Hausa or Fulani, 16.4 percent are Igbo, and 12.3 percent belong to other ethnic groups. A majority of the

respondents (71 percent) reside in urban areas, while 28.8 percent live in rural communities. Monthly income levels vary across the sample. About 22 percent earn less than ₦50,000, 27 percent earn between ₦50,001 and ₦100,000, and 18 percent fall within the ₦100,001 to ₦150,000 range. Only 4 percent report earning above ₦300,000 monthly.

From table 2, a total of five participants took part in the in-depth interviews conducted as part of the qualitative component of this study. The participants represent a range of occupations, including a fuel station manager, civil servant, nurse, and journalist. One participant did not state their occupation. All five interviewees confirmed they had heard of fuel subsidy and were aware of its removal by the federal government. However, none of the participants expressed current support for the policy. One participant initially supported the removal but later withdrew their support after experiencing its consequences. The remaining four participants did not support the policy at all. When asked about the economic impact of the subsidy removal, all participants described the effects as negative. Their responses point to increased financial pressure on households and growing concerns about the affordability of basic needs following the removal of the subsidy.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents:

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	214	55
Female	174	45
Age group		
31-40 years	118	30.4
41-50 years	100	25.7
20-30 years	94	24.2
51 years above	76	19.5
Marital Status		
Married	182	47
Single	136	35
Divorcee	42	10.8

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Widow	28	7
Number of children		
No Children	124	32
Declined to mention no of children	61	15.7
Four children	51	13.1
Three children	44	11.3
Five children	32	8.2
Six children	28	7.2
Seven children	20	5
Two children	16	4
Eight children	12	3
Education		
Tertiary	182	47
Secondary/Islamic education	150	38
Primary	32	8
No formal education	24	6
Occupation		
Civil servants	117	30
Transporters	71	19
Students	64	16
Professionals	44	11
Farmers	36	9
Skilled manual jobs	28	7
Unskilled manual jobs	16	4
Unemployed	12	3
Ethnic groups		
Yoruba	192	49.4
Hausa/Fulani	84	21.6
Igbo	64	16.4
Others	48	12.3
Place of residence		

Urban	276	71
Rural	112	28.8
Income per month		
Less than N50,000	88	22
N50,001-N100,000	108	27
N100,001-N150,000	72	18
N150,001-N200,000	48	12
N200,001-N250,000	40	10
N250,001-N300,000	28	7
Above N300,000	16	4

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 2: Socio-demographic information of interviewee

Participant	Occupation	Heard of Fuel Subsidy	Aware of Removal	Supports Subsidy Removal	Economic Impact Stated
1	Not stated	Yes	Yes	No	Negative
2	Fuel Station Manager	Yes	Yes	No	Negative
3	Civil Servant	Yes	Yes	Initially Yes, now No	Negative
4	Nurse	Yes	Yes	No	Negative
5	Journalist	Yes	Yes	No	Negative

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Knowledge and Perception on Fuel Subsidy

Out of 388 respondents, 384 (99 percent) indicated that they had heard about fuel subsidy, and the same number were aware of its removal by the Nigerian government. A total of 80 respondents (20.6 percent) considered the removal a good decision, while 84 (21.6 percent) expressed support for it. Eighty-six respondents (22 percent) believed the removal was necessary. Regarding challenges, 372 respondents (96 percent) identified corruption as a major hindrance to the implementation of fuel subsidy in Nigeria. Only 56 respondents (14

percent) stated that the government had implemented adequate measures to cushion the impact of the subsidy removal.

Table 3 Knowledge and Perception on Fuel Subsidy

Question	Yes (Freq/%)	No (Freq/%)
Have you heard about fuel subsidy before?	384(99%)	4(1%)
Are you aware of fuel subsidy removal by the Nigerian government?	384(99%)	4(1%)
Do you think the removal of fuel subsidy is a good decision?	80(20.6%)	308(79.3%)
Do you support the removal of fuel subsidy?	84(21.6%)	304(78.3%)
Do you think it was necessary to remove fuel subsidy?	86(22%)	302(77%)
Corruption is perceived to be the major hindrance towards successful implementation of fuel subsidy in Nigeria	372(96%)	16(4%)
Do you think government has implemented adequate measures to cushion the impact of fuel subsidy removal?	56(14%)	332(85%)

Knowledge and perception of the participants in the qualitative data generated through selected interviews equally resonate with the quantitative source. For instance, the interviews revealed that all five participants were well-informed about fuel subsidy and its removal in Nigeria. There was a shared understanding that fuel subsidy had been a form of government support to reduce fuel costs, and its removal has stirred significant public concern. However, opinions about the policy itself varied. Four out of five participants (Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5) openly rejected the decision to remove the subsidy, believing it did more harm than good. For instance, Participant 1—who had the benefit of traveling internationally—expressed his disappointment by comparing Nigeria to other countries:

“I’ve visited several countries, including Saudi Arabia and England, which are considered developed. These countries still provide subsidies on essential commodities for their citizens.”

Participant 2, a fuel station manager, acknowledged that while the concept of subsidy removal might be defensible in theory, the Nigerian government failed in execution:

“The removal of fuel subsidy could have been a good decision if the appropriate pre- and post-subsidy measures had been properly implemented.”

Only one participant (Participant 3) initially believed the removal could be beneficial. However, his position shifted after witnessing how poorly the policy was implemented:

“I supported it initially, but it seems the government doesn't know how to properly implement the policy.”

Corruption was a major concern across all interviews. Every participant linked the failure of the subsidy removal to deep-rooted corruption in government. Participant 5, a journalist, put it bluntly:

“The funds realized from the subsidy removal cannot be tracked or accounted for.”

This common perception reflects a deep distrust in government accountability and a belief that the policy, rather than being people-centered, was driven by elite interests.

Economic Condition before Fuel Subsidy Removal

A total of 157 respondents (40.4 percent) rated their economic condition before fuel subsidy removal as "better," while 97 (25.0 percent) rated it as "much better." Seventy-one respondents (18.2 percent) described it as "good." When asked about their current living condition, 166 respondents (42.7 percent) rated it as "bad," while 86 (22.1 percent) and 46 (11.8 percent) described it as "worse" and "much worse," respectively. Regarding future expectations, 102 respondents (26.2 percent) expect their living condition to be "fairly good" in the next one year, 87 (22.4 percent) expect it to be "much better," and 82 (21.1 percent) expect it to be "better."

On household economic condition, 152 respondents (39.1 percent) rated it as "bad," 77 (19.8 percent) as "worse," and 68 (17.5 percent) as "much worse." In comparison to the pre-removal period, 146 respondents (37.6 percent) rated the current national economic condition

as "much worse," while 74 (19.0 percent) rated it as "bad." For future national economic expectations, 135 respondents (34.7 percent) expect conditions to be "better," 92 (23.7 percent) as "fairly good," and 55 (14.4 percent) as "much better." Regarding savings after subsidy removal, 112 respondents (28.8 percent) rated their savings condition as "bad," 75 (19.3 percent) as "worse," and 54 (13.9 percent) as "much worse." On purchasing power before removal, 124 respondents (31.9 percent) rated it as "better," 84 (21.6 percent) as "much better," and 68 (17.5 percent) as "fairly good." After removal, 132 respondents (34.0 percent) rated their purchasing power as "bad," 76 (19.5 percent) as "worse," and 58 (14.9 percent) as "much worse."

The generated data through qualitative source equally aligns with the above quantitative results. A strong and unanimous theme in the interviews was that life was more manageable economically before the removal of fuel subsidy. All five participants said that they could at least make ends meet—some even saved money. That reality has now shifted drastically. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 all stated that they used to have a savings culture before the subsidy was removed. Participant 1 explained how the change affected his financial stability:

"I used to save, but not anymore. What I earn now is barely enough to survive."

Participant 3 echoed this with deeper concern:

"I used to save before the subsidy was removed, but now, I borrow just to survive."

The cost of living has reportedly increased across the board, and this includes food, transportation, and basic daily expenses. Participant 2 shared:

"I have experienced a significant economic downturn since the removal."

Even for civil servants like Participant 3, who typically depend on fixed salaries, the situation has become unbearable. He said:

"Even our salaries are no longer enough to sustain us."

In essence, what emerged from these interviews is that the removal of fuel subsidy directly plunged already-struggling households into deeper economic hardship. Their earnings, which were previously sufficient or at least manageable, are no longer enough to meet basic needs.

Table 4: Economic condition before fuel subsidy removal

Question	Good	Fairly Good	Better	Much Better	Bad	Worse	Much Worse	Same
How would you rate your economic condition before the removal of fuel subsidy?	71 (18.2%)	22 (5.6%)	157 (40.4%)	97 (25.0%)	16 (4.1%)	5 (1.2%)	2 (0.5%)	18 (4.6%)
What is your current living condition?	22 (5.6%)	18 (4.6%)	19 (4.8%)	12 (3.0%)	166 (42.7%)	86 (22.1%)	46 (11.8%)	19 (4.8%)
With the fuel subsidy removal, how do you expect your living condition to be in the next one year?	72 (18.5%)	102 (26.2%)	82 (21.1%)	87 (22.4%)	13 (3.3%)	12 (3.0%)	8 (2.0%)	12 (3.0%)
How do you rate the present economic condition of your household?	19 (4.8%)	18 (4.6%)	12 (3.0%)	24 (6.1%)	152 (39.1%)	77 (19.8%)	68 (17.5%)	18 (4.6%)
How do you rate the present economic condition of the country in comparison to its condition before fuel subsidy removal?	14 (3.6%)	16 (4.1%)	28 (7.2%)	22 (5.6%)	74 (19.0%)	66 (17.0%)	146 (37.6%)	22 (5.6%)
How do you expect the economic condition of the country to be in the next one year?	48 (12.3%)	92 (23.7%)	135 (34.7%)	55 (14.4%)	8 (2.0%)	12 (3.0%)	4 (1.0%)	34 (8.7%)
How do you rate your savings after fuel	30	45 (11.5%)	22 (5.6%)	16 (4.1%)	112	75	54 (13.9%)	34

subsidy removal?	(7.7%)				(28.8%)	(19.3%)		(8.7%)
How do you rate your purchasing power before fuel subsidy removal?	56 (14.4%))	68 (17.5%)	124 (31.9%)	84 (21.6%)	18 (4.6%)	12 (3.0%)	10 (2.5%)	16 (4.1%)
How do you rate your purchasing power after fuel subsidy removal?	28 (7.2%)	22 (5.6%)	16 (4.1%)	12 (3.0%)	132 (34.0%)	76 (19.5%)	58 (14.9%)	44 (11.3%)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Social Condition Before and After Fuel Subsidy Removal

A total of 168 respondents (43.2 percent) reported that the cost of transportation became significantly high after the removal of fuel subsidy. An additional 84 respondents (21.6 percent) stated it was moderately high, and 76 (19.5 percent) indicated it was high. Only 6 respondents (1.5 percent) reported no change. Regarding the prices of goods and services, 198 respondents (51.0 percent) reported a significantly high increase, 82 (21.1 percent) indicated high, and 75 (19.3 percent) reported moderately high changes. No respondent indicated any level of decrease or no change. In relation to social gathering attendance, 138 respondents (35.5 percent) reported a low level of attendance after the subsidy removal. Seventy-seven (19.8 percent) reported moderately low attendance, while 82 (21.1 percent) indicated significantly low attendance. Only 14 respondents (3.6 percent) reported a significant improvement. For overall expenditure, 188 respondents (48.4 percent) rated it as significantly high. Seventy-six (19.5 percent) reported moderately high expenditure, while 54 (13.9 percent) rated it as high.

Regarding spending on essential items, 163 respondents (42.0 percent) rated their spending as low, 88 (22.6 percent) as significantly low, and 34 (8.7 percent) indicated no change. When asked about the impact of fuel subsidy removal on business or livelihood, 102 respondents (26.2 percent) reported low impact, 64 (16.4 percent) significantly low, and 62 (15.9 percent) moderately low. A total of 32 respondents (8.2 percent) indicated a significantly high impact. For healthcare service delivery, 155 respondents (39.9 percent) reported that the cost was significantly high, while 81 (20.8 percent) reported high and 74 (19.0 percent) moderately high. Only 21 respondents (5.4 percent) indicated no change. On overall quality of life, 124 respondents (31.9 percent) rated it as significantly low, 97 (25.0 percent) as low, and 74 (19.0 percent) as moderately low. Only 25 respondents (6.4 percent) reported no change. Regarding government palliative measures, 116 respondents (29.8 percent) reported the impact as significantly low. Eighty-four (21.6 percent) rated it as low, and 78 (20.1 percent) indicated no change.

The quantitative result in this section as shown by table 4.2.2 above is supported by the result of the qualitative interview conducted on the social impact of fuel subsidy. Beyond economic impacts, the removal of fuel subsidy has also had serious social consequences, particularly in terms of work-life balance, mental health, professional satisfaction, and daily living. Participants shared how their social conditions have deteriorated, not just due to rising costs, but also because

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of stress, work disruptions, and the psychological toll of living in survival mode. For example, Participant 3, a civil servant, noted the effect of increased transportation costs on his daily life:

“Some institutions have reduced the number of working days for staff due to high fuel costs. Unfortunately, my workplace requires me to report daily, which has strained my finances.”

Participant 4, a nurse, brought a more institutional perspective, explaining how the harsh economic climate has triggered a wave of emigration among health workers:

“We have lost competent healthcare workers to other countries due to the worsening working conditions triggered by the removal.”

Furthermore, the stress of day-to-day survival has affected job performance. Participant 3 shared that his focus and productivity have dropped significantly:

“It has affected me badly. I'm often distracted by thoughts of how to make ends meet.”

When asked about government support in the form of palliative measures, all five participants firmly stated that they have seen no help. Palliatives were described as mere media headlines, disconnected from the reality of the average Nigerian. As Participant 5 put it:

“The palliatives are only in the news; there is no evidence that they exist or help.”

Participant 1 offered a similar sentiment:

“The palliatives are only mentioned in the news; they're not real.”

This shared disbelief in government interventions further illustrates how the social safety net is perceived as non-existent, leaving citizens to fend for themselves amid rising hardship.

Table 5: Social condition before and after fuel subsidy removal

Questions	Frequency	Percentage
How has the removal of fuel subsidy affected your cost of Transportation?		
Significantly high	168	43.2
Moderately high	84	21.6
Fairly high	52	13.4
High	76	19.5
No change	6	1.5

Low	2	0.5
Moderately Low	0	0.0
Significantly Low	0	0.0
How has the removal of fuel subsidy affected prices of goods and services you purchase?		
Significantly high	198	51.0
Moderately high	75	19.3
Fairly high	33	8.5
High	82	21.1
No change	0	0.0
Low	0	0.0
Moderately low	0	0.0
Significantly Low	0	0.0
How has fuel subsidy removal improved your socio-gathering attendance?		
Significantly high	14	3.6
Moderately high	10	2.5
Fairly high	8	2.0
High	6	1.5
No change	53	13.6
Low	138	35.5
Moderately Low	77	19.8
Significantly Low	82	21.1
How would you rate your expenditure after the fuel subsidy removal?		
Significantly high	188	48.4
Moderately high	76	19.5
Fairly high	47	12.1
High	54	13.9
No change	12	3.0

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Low	4	1.0
Moderately Low	7	1.8
Significantly Low	0	0.0
How would you rate your spending on essential items due to fuel subsidy removal?		
Significantly high	15	3.8
Moderately high	22	5.6
Fairly high	18	4.6
High	16	4.1
No change	34	8.7
Low	163	42.0
Moderately low	32	8.2
Significantly low	88	22.6
How has fuel subsidy removal improved your business or livelihood?		
Significantly high	32	8.2
Moderately high	41	10.5
Fairly high	38	9.7
High	27	6.9
No change	22	5.6
Low	102	26.2
Moderately low	62	15.9
Significantly low	64	16.4
Considering your personal experience, how would you rate the cost of healthcare service delivery after the removal of fuel subsidy?		
Significantly high	155	39.9
Moderately high	74	19.0
Fairly high	47	12.1

High	81	20.8
No change	21	5.4
Low	4	1.0
Moderately low	6	1.5
Significantly low	0	0.0
How has removal of fuel subsidy affected your overall quality of life?		
Significantly high	15	3.8
Moderately high	18	4.6
Fairly high	19	4.8
High	16	4.1
No change	25	6.4
Low	97	25
Moderately low	74	19.0
Significantly low	124	31.9
To what extent has the government's palliative measures towards cushioning the effects of fuel subsidy removal impacted on your life?		
Significantly high	4	1.0
Moderately high	9	2.3
Fairly high	7	1.8
High	12	3.0
No change	78	20.1
Low	84	21.6
Moderately low	78	20.1
Significantly low	116	29.8

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Hypothesis One: Economic condition of the people before and after subsidy removal is not significantly different.

Testing the above hypothesis, the two variables (fuel subsidy removal and economic condition of households) are cross tabulated. The output of the cross tabulation of the two variables can be

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seen in the table 6 below. Table 7 presents the results of a paired sample t-test comparing the economic condition of households before and after the removal of the fuel subsidy. The average rating of economic condition before the policy change was 6.55, indicating that many households perceived their situation as relatively positive. After the subsidy was removed, the mean rating dropped sharply to 3.17, pointing to a notable decline in household economic well-being. This result is based on data from 388 participants. The standard deviations for the “before” and “after” conditions were 1.43 and 1.90 respectively, showing that while there was some variation in responses, the decline in average economic condition was both substantial and consistent across the sample. The standard errors (both under 0.1) suggest that the sample means are reliable estimates of the broader population's experience.

The correlation between the two sets of scores was -0.509, indicating a moderate negative relationship: households that previously rated their economic condition more favorably were more likely to report a significant decline after the subsidy removal. The t-test produced a high t-statistic value of 25.45, with a p-value far below 0.001 ($1.21e-84$), confirming that the difference in scores is statistically significant. In plain terms, this analysis strongly supports the conclusion that the fuel subsidy removal had a negative and measurable impact on the economic condition of Nigerian households.

Table 6: cross tabulation of economic condition of households before and after fuel subsidy removal

	Before fuel subsidy removal	After fuel subsidy removal
Good	71	19
Fairly good	22	18
Better	157	12
Much better	97	24
Bad	16	152
Worse	5	77
Much worse	2	68
Same	18	18

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 7: paired sample t-test of economic condition of households before and after fuel subsidy removal

Pair	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Before fuel subsidy removal	6.55	388	1.43	0.079
After fuel subsidy removal	3.17	388	1.90	0.097
Pair	N	Correlation	Sig.	t-Statistic
Before fuel subsidy removal & After fuel subsidy removal	388	-0.509	<0.001 (1.21e-84)	25.45

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Hypothesis Two: Purchasing power of the people before and after subsidy removal is not significantly different.

To test the above hypothesis, the two variables (fuel subsidy removal and purchasing power of the households) are cross tabulated. The output of the cross tabulation of the two variables can be seen in the table 8. Table 9 presents the results of a paired sample t-test conducted to assess whether there was a significant change in the purchasing power of households before and after the removal of the fuel subsidy. The findings show a clear decline in purchasing power following the policy change. Before the subsidy was removed, households reported an average purchasing power score of 6.10, with a standard deviation of 1.75. After the subsidy was eliminated, this average dropped substantially to 3.27, with a slightly higher standard deviation of 1.78. These results are based on responses from 388 participants, and the standard error values (0.079 and 0.097 respectively) suggest the sample means are fairly precise estimates of the population values. In addition to the significant drop in means, the correlation between the two sets of responses (before and after) was calculated as -0.696, indicating a strong negative relationship. This suggests that households which reported higher purchasing power before the subsidy removal tended to report much lower purchasing power afterward. The t-test produced a t-statistic of 18.89 and a p-value well below 0.001 (specifically 7.06e-84), confirming that the difference in purchasing power is not due to random chance but represents a statistically significant decline. In simple terms, the removal of the fuel subsidy had a clear and measurable negative impact on how much households felt they could afford to buy.

Table 8: cross tabulation of purchasing power of households before and after fuel subsidy removal

	Before fuel subsidy removal	After fuel subsidy removal
Good	56	28
Fairly good	68	22
Better	124	16
Much better	84	12
Bad	18	132
Worse	12	76
Much worse	10	58
Same	16	44

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 9: paired sample t-test of purchasing power of households before and after fuel subsidy removal

Pair	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Before fuel subsidy removal	6.10	388	1.75	0.079
After fuel subsidy removal	3.27	388	1.78	0.097
Pair	N	Correlation	Sig.	t-Statistic
Before fuel subsidy removal & After fuel subsidy removal	388	-0.696	<0.001 (7.06e-84)	18.89

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The findings of this study suggest that the removal of the PMS subsidy was widely perceived as unnecessary by residents of Kwara State. Quantitative data revealed that 77 percent of respondents considered the removal unjustified, while only 22 percent viewed it as necessary. This was further supported by qualitative interviews, where four out of five participants expressed opposition to the policy. The rejection appeared to stem not only from discomfort with change, but also from a lack of trust in the government's capacity to implement the reform in a way that prioritizes citizen welfare. One participant pointed out that even advanced economies

such as England and Saudi Arabia continue to offer subsidies on essential commodities, challenging the idea that subsidy removal is inherently progressive. This perspective echoes the argument by Ovaga and Okechukwu (2022), who noted that despite the mismanagement associated with Nigeria's subsidy regime, removing it without a reliable and transparent structure in place tends to cause more harm than good.

Some scholars have emphasized the theoretical benefits of subsidy removal. For example, Ozili (2023) highlighted its potential to free up public funds, reduce fiscal deficits, and stimulate domestic production. However, as confirmed in both survey data and interviews, these anticipated outcomes have not materialized. Respondents expressed frustration over the absence of transparent palliative measures and government reinvestment strategies. This reflects Kyle's (2018) observation that public support for subsidy reform is often conditional on the visibility and credibility of compensation efforts. Similarly, the IMF (2022) acknowledged that while long-term gains might result from subsidy withdrawal, abrupt and unprotected implementation—such as in Nigeria's case—risks worsening socio-economic conditions in the short term. The evidence gathered in this study highlights that the primary concern was not whether subsidies should be removed, but how and when such a policy should be carried out. This aligns with Dong et al. (2025) assertion that fuel subsidies in Nigeria often function as informal redistribution mechanisms that benefit the poor. In the absence of clear and equitable alternatives, their removal was widely perceived as ill-timed and poorly executed.

This perception was reinforced by the economic outcomes experienced by respondents. Prior to subsidy removal, 40.4 percent and 25 percent of participants rated their economic condition as “better” and “much better” respectively. These ratings shifted drastically after removal, with 42.7 percent describing their condition as “bad” and 33.9 percent as either “worse” or “much worse.” Statistical analysis confirmed this change, with a significant decline in the mean rating of household economic condition from 6.55 before removal to 3.17 after it ($p < 0.001$). Purchasing power also dropped from a mean of 6.10 to 3.27 ($p < 0.001$), and respondents reported a sharp reduction in savings. These trends reflect the challenges described by interview participants. One civil servant mentioned that salaries were no longer sufficient to meet basic needs, while another respondent reported no longer being able to save. These narratives align with Bala's (2023) findings that subsidy removal in fragile economies without safety nets results in erosion of real income and reduced demand. Ozili (2023) similarly projected that subsidy removal would

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initially increase poverty and inflation. Herdiatna and Sulisnaningrum (2021), examining Indonesia's experience, found that subsidy withdrawal without adequate compensation led to increased poverty.

Despite these adverse outcomes, there remains a discourse in policy circles that subsidy removal is necessary for long-term growth. The neoclassical argument, as stated by Ozili and Obiora (2023), posits that eliminating subsidies allows governments to reallocate resources toward productive sectors. However, this study demonstrates that Nigeria's approach lacked the planning and public engagement that enabled smoother transitions in other contexts, such as Ghana or Indonesia. Instead of the expected improvements, the result has been economic shocks that deepened hardship. This underscores the importance of sequencing, transparency, and adequate compensation frameworks, particularly in economies where citizens are already burdened by poverty and inflation.

The study also reveals that the removal of fuel subsidy was not seen as the only policy option. Although this was not tested through a specific hypothesis, the perception among respondents was that the subsidy program failed due to corruption rather than its foundational purpose. Ninety-six percent of respondents pointed to mismanagement and poor oversight, not the subsidy itself, as the main problem. Interview participants echoed this view. One stated that corrupt officials should have been held accountable instead of eliminating the policy altogether. Another questioned the transparency of funds reportedly saved from the removal. These perspectives reflect findings by Haring et al. (2023), Chelminski (2018), and Kyle (2018), who found that trust and accountability are key to public acceptance of subsidy reforms. Where governments fail to ensure proper management of subsidy savings, resistance and dissatisfaction are inevitable. Yi et al. (2021) similarly warned that abrupt subsidy removal without visible, pro-poor alternatives often leads to backlash and worsens inequality.

Another key finding of this study is the ineffectiveness of the government's palliative measures intended to cushion the effects of subsidy removal. Eighty-five percent of survey respondents indicated that they had not benefited from any form of intervention, while only 14 percent reported otherwise. Further, 69.5 percent rated the effectiveness of the palliatives as low or significantly low. A one-sample t-test produced a mean score of 1.75, with a t-statistic of -28.22 and p-value < 0.001, confirming that the majority of citizens did not perceive any meaningful

impact from government support. Interviews confirmed this result. Participants consistently stated that they had not received any assistance. One respondent remarked that palliatives only exist in official announcements, not in reality. These accounts mirror the conclusion by Haring et al. (2023), who observed that public trust in reforms hinges on whether governments deliver visible and credible support. In Ghana, for example, the redirection of subsidy savings to social sectors earned public support (Layade, 2023). In contrast, Nigeria's opaque implementation failed to reassure or support its citizens.

Findings of this study show that the PMS subsidy removal policy was perceived as poorly timed, badly executed, and inadequately supported by mitigating measures. While the theoretical case for subsidy removal may be strong, the lack of transparency, institutional trust, and social safety nets undermined the policy's effectiveness in Nigeria. The economic and social costs borne by citizens in the absence of credible compensatory frameworks demonstrate the urgent need for more inclusive, accountable, and phased approaches to future reforms.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study clearly shows that removing the PMS subsidy has hit the people of Kwara State incredibly hard leading to smaller household budgets, weaker purchasing power and a painful rise in the daily cost of living. While the policy was meant to fix national financial issues, it was rushed into action without the strategic planning or immediate safety nets needed to protect everyday families leaving many to feel that deep-rooted corruption and mismanagement remain the real crisis. Moving forward, the government must abandon this "shock therapy" approach and adopt a human-centered, phased strategy to fix the damage. In the immediate short term (0–6 months), this means rolling out targeted transport subsidies along high-traffic routes in Kwara State and utilizing direct digital cash transfers to get relief straight into the hands of low-income earners and petty traders. Over the medium term (6–18 months), the focus must shift to rebuilding broken trust by launching a transparent public dashboard to track exactly where subsidy savings are being spent, while actively helping transport unions transition public fleets to cheaper Compressed Natural Gas (CNG). Finally, for long-term stability (18+ months), Nigeria must permanently break its cycle of vulnerability by investing heavily in local refining capacity to end import dependence while diversifying Kwara's economy into solar-powered agriculture and local manufacturing so that the well-being of its citizens is never again tied to the volatile price of a gallon of fuel.

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