

Subsidy Removal and Crime Effect In Nigeria (A Case Study of Nyanyan in Abuja) an Empirical Analysis

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ABSTRACT: *Nigeria has been boiling over deregulation or the removal of fuel subsidy in the downstream sector because of its attendant consequences like inflation, untold hardship and unprecedented crime upsurge that could make the lives of the ordinary people in Nigeria more miserable. However, amidst this strong agitation by its citizens against subsidy removal, the government of Nigeria under President Goodluck Jonathan with the confidence of his key cabinet members resolved to remove the \$7.5 billion consumer fuel subsidy; an announcement which raised dust within the Nigerian state on 1st January 2012 and thereafter. The essence of this study is to investigate the impact of this government policy, using survey research method through questionnaire instrument to determine the crime propensity of the policy measure on the Nigerian populace. It adopted neoclassical welfare theoretical view and has Nyanyan residential area in Abuja as a case study.*

Keywords—*Subsidy, Deregulation, Inflation, Crime Effect and Government Policy.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Consequent upon the removal of fuel subsidy within the economy, inflation in Nigeria jumped to 12.6 percent from 10.3 percent in the previous month of January; National Statistics agency record of Monday 20th February, 2012. “This increase in the headline index was due to the partial removal of the subsidy (for petrol/gasoline) that pushed up prices of many food and non-food items as a result of the increase in transportation costs,” the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) specified this in its figures as at (20th Feb., 2012). However, despite this expected consequences, concurrent Governments over the years insisted that the subsidy it pays on petroleum products are too much for it to bear and that almost all funds go into private pockets at the end of the day. Therefore, government’s position is that it would be better if it removes the subsidy so that the few fat cats reaping the country off would no longer do so. Below attempts a complication of the way governments over the years have removed what it claimed to be subsidies on petroleum products; Anthony (2011).

1978, 15 kobo per litre

1990, 60 kobo per litre

1992, 70 kobo per litre

1993, N3.25 kobo and N11 per litre

And from 1994 to 1998 the official pump price hovered around N11.0k per litre – these happened during the military era. However, the people’s expectation that their living conditions would improve with the coming of “democracy” in mid-1999 met with nothing but disappointment! Achebe (2012).

Instead of “democracy” to improve their lives, things became tougher as the price of a litre of fuel was pushed from N11 per litre to N20 and up again to N22.0k in 2000.

The anomalies in the nation’s economic policymaking process have always made life unbearable in the society. As if the government was not happy that the people were still breathing, it increased the price again to N26 in 2001 from where it was increased in 2003 to N40, with the usual deceptive promises that the subsidy that has been removed would better the lives of Nigerians.

Just before President Olusegun Obasanjo left office, he jerked up the price of Petrol to N65 per litre. But, when the late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua came in, the Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC, resisted the increase and force Yar’Adua to revert to the N65 per litre for petrol.

Today, Nigerians are being told that they may eventually have to pay between N120 and N150 per litre of petrol – all in the name of removal of subsidy on petrol. Achebe (2012).

It is this neglected impact of removal of fuel subsidy which the government never takes consideration of upon the Nigerian populace that this study set to examine, especially more, as it bothers on the likely crime effects within the society.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study is purely an empirical analysis, where observation and survey research method through the use of questionnaire was adapted as the guiding instrument to measure the impact of the subsidy removal and crime effect within the Nigerian state. Each questionnaire for the research has at least about three sections and each of those sections contains at least four questions.

The location of the research study was Nyanyan, Abuja while cluster sampling approach was considered for this study. Of course, the lists of the respondents are not readily available, so this justified the submission of Sarndal, Swenson and Wreman (1992). Hence, since the researcher could not obtain any special list on the likely respondents, this sample method becomes viable. However, a simple random sampling of the residents of this area equally facilitated the sample procedure.

The sampled population was clustered as followed: Unemployed Youth (20); Artisan/Non-government workers (20); Government Employees in the Area (20), which informed a total population of (60) respondents.

The study however through the question—focus in the questionnaire instrument tends to probe more into certain areas which hinge on consequences of subsidy removal as relating criminal activities in the area judging by the teaming presence of unemployed youth within the environment. It equally seeks to take certain positions regarding the observed socio-economic conditions of the people within the area. The study would therefore examine such questions as highlighted below among others:

- Possible socio-economic conditions of the people due to subsidy removal
- The trend and dimension of crime to this effect and,
- A review of the past increases/fuel hike in Nigeria and other structural causative factors that tend to heighten the criminal activities within the Nigerian state.

In this empirical analysis however, economic factors such as high level of poverty, up-surgings unemployment rate, increasing gap between the rich and the poor as well as high rate of corruption within the governmental circle among others would be assumed to have contributed immensely to the acute demonstrations, critical industrial action measures and societal crime upsurge that attended the policy measure of Mr. President regarding removal of fuel subsidy. Data collected from the field would be tabled and presented using percentages in the analysis for easy interpretation. The study would equally put forward some recommendations towards checkmating this societal crisis.

2.1 Hypothesis

- First subsidy removal would inflate the prices of goods and services and thereby impoverish the people
- Second, subsidy removal would enhance propensity for crime/criminal activities within the Nigerian State.

III. THE TERM SUBSIDY

A subsidy is assistance paid to a business or economic sector; Asiwaju (2003). Most subsidies are made by the government to producers or distributed as subventions in an industry to prevent the decline of that industry (e.g. as a result of continuous unprofitable operations) or an increase in the prices of its products or simply to encourage it to hire more labor (as in the case of a wage subsidy). Examples are subsidies to encourage the sale of export; subsidies on some foods to keep down the cost of living, especially in urban areas; and subsidies to encourage the expansion of farm production and achieve self-reliance in food production, Bishop (2012). Subsidy has been used by economists with different meanings and connotations in different contexts. The dictionary (Concise Oxford) defines it as “money granted by state, public body etc to keep down the prices of commodities etc” Environmental economists define subsidies as uncompensated environmental damage arising from any flow of goods and services. In a budgetary context, it may be defined as “unrecovered costs in the public provision of private goods” Bakare (2012).

Subsidies are often regarded as a form of protectionism or trade barrier by making domestic goods and services artificially competitive against imports. Subsidies may distort markets, and can impose large economic costs; Asiwaju (2003). Financial assistance in the form of a subsidy may come from one’s government, but the term subsidy may also refer to assistance granted by others, such as individuals or non-governmental institutions.

Examples of industries or sectors where subsidies are often found include utilities, gasoline in the United States, Welfare, farm subsidies, and (in some countries) certain aspects of student loans.

IV. ISSUES IN FUEL SUBSIDY IN NIGERIA

In spite of the debate against the policy, the government of President Goodluck Jonathan insists that the current price of petrol at N97 per litre accommodates a subsidy of about N55 per litre; Abimbola (2012). Some critics have however maintained that there is, in fact, no such subsidy; Agbakoba (2012) others demand that even if it exists, it should be seen as the social benefit of having crude oil in our backyard. Nothing therefore underlines the backward and unproductive nature of Nigeria's capitalist class than this issue of subsidy and fuel price hike. The Nigerian capitalist government predicated the hike in fuel price on the need to stop the financial hemorrhaging of the country through the subsidy paid on petrol price; Bakare (2012). (According to government sources, over N3.6 trillion has been spent on fuel subsidy since 2006. However, according to various analyses and information, this subsidy has been nothing but pure fraud. In the first instance, Nigeria's state owned oil corporation, NNPC has an installed capacity to refine 450,000 barrels of crude oil per day; this is about 50 percent of national consumption of petrol (aside other fuel products like kerosene, diesel etc). however, this has reduced drastically to mere 170,000 refining capacity as a result of the deliberate collapse of the refineries, as hundreds of billions budgeted for the maintenance of the refineries have not yielded any basic result while none of those responsible for this racket gave been brought to book; even if for mere window dressing. This is itself a reflection of the deep-level connection of virtually every facet of Nigeria's economic and political class to the rackets and looting in the oli industry; Achebe (2012). Worse still, the remnant of the NNPC's allocated crude oil is also a mean to shortchange the country. The remaining 280,000 barrels are just allocated to foreign refineries, even in West Africa to refine and bring refine petrol. No account of the price of refining or other products refined from the crude; it is only byzantine barter system! This implies that the Nigerian capitalist class (and its so-called 'technocrats') have no clue on how to run the economy even on a capitalist basis, and they care less for that – inasmuch as their pecuniary interests are satisfied, Nigerian economy can simply collapse. If the refineries have been collapsed, is it also too much for NNPC to directly import the fuel need of the country instead of handling it over to middlemen under the guise of importers. At least, if NNPC is importing the fuel need of the country, the question of handling over public resources to a few fuel importers will not arise in the first instance. Already the Obasanjo government had cancelled custom tax on imported fuel by the middlemen since 2002, thus subsidizing their unhindered wealth accumulation. However, expecting government to undertake this task is assuming that the capitalist government is not acting on behalf of this cabal of importers, their bank underwriters, shippers, local transporters, military supremacists, corrupt government officials etc, who actually supported/propped up this government. What underscore this than the fact that in 2011 alone, the number of importers increased from around twenty in 2010 to more than hundred (including construction and portfolio companies)? This is not unexpected; in 2009 and 2010, only around N260 billion was used to subsidize fuel, but by 2011, the subsidy cost had grown to over N1.6 trillion! **Kola (2012) online version.**

V. THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

Removal or concession for subsidy has been defined to be an economic policy issue of the government. To this achievement, some economic scholars have propounded theories that directly or indirectly brushed on this issue. Among such welfare related theories that have jurisdiction within the discourse of this subject matter include:

The Classical Utilitarianism: it is an ethical theory which postulates that the conduct under which, at any given circumstance, government policies should objectively be such which has the potency of producing the greatest amount of happiness of the whole to ameliorate the suffering of the people. This is Sidgwick's classic statement of the utilitarian criterion for judging social actions and institutions, a criterion prominently associated with the names of Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, and F. Y. Edgeworth. However, this welfare approach could not really pin point the nature of welfare aspired for by the Nigerian populace through the instrument of subsidy since availability of the entire subsidy payment itself cannot in anyway eradicate the many societal factors that predispose people to unhappiness on the overall. Hence, subsidy removal may not achieve a holistic happiness in this regards contrary to classical utilitarianism's postulation even if the entire pump-price is paid off by the government.

Traditional Welfare theory: This deals with the concept of "collective values" or "a social good" that is not derived from individual well-being.

Majorly, the problem of concern for traditional welfare theorists was on how best to secure or heap up general wealth to which everyone is expected to have a sense of belonging rather than the practical utility good which everyone could physically and individually benefit by such good. Rather, it has to be stored up somewhere in everybody's 'interest.' Having observed however, that neither the classical utilitarianism nor the traditional welfare theory directly address issues of interest in the lack of governmental welfare through subsidy removal in Nigeria, hence the need to look at Neo-classical welfare theory.

Neoclassical Welfare Theory: The contention and major submission of neoclassical welfare theory is that the performance of economic institutions can and should be judged according to whether they provide economic goods in quantities that accord with people's relative desires for those goods and at the bearest minimum cost. High marks are given to economic systems that display a close "fit" between the relative terms on which economic goods are made available and people's relative preferences for those goods. As I.M.D Little (2009:13) puts it, "It is a good thing that individuals should have what they want, since they themselves know best what they want, while it is the duty of every government, on the other hand, to make such available to them without stress." Hence, the neoclassical welfare theory is considered suitable for this study since it emphasizes more on government responsibility to make the need of the people available without undue stress to such achievement in the spirit of economic goods of governance. More so, it equally highlights the need for every government's acceptability to be adjudged on this basis. This highlight also relates largely to the research concern of determining the effect of government policy of subsidy removal on crime rate within the Nigerian state.

VI. STATISTICAL/TABULAR ANALYSIS OF SUBSIDY REMOVAL OVER THE YEARS

CHRONICLE OF PMS PRICE INCREASES IN NIGERIA (Vis-à-vis Crude Oil Price and Forex Variations)

Date	Crude Regime	Forex (N:\$)	PMS Price increase	%Increases
Jan. 1966		\$21.5/bbl Gowon	N0.65:\$1	8.8k
1 Oct. 1978		\$51.6/bbl OBJ	N0.61:\$1	8.45k to 15.3k 81%
1 Oct. 1978		\$51.6/bbl OBJ	N0.61:\$1	8.45k to 15.3k 81%
20 Apr 1982		\$74.2/bbl Shagari	N0.67:\$1	15.3k to 20k 31%
31 Mar 1986		\$29.6/bbl IBB	N2.02:\$1	20k to 39.5k (SAP/Naira Devaluation) 98%
10 Apr 1988		\$28.3/bbl IBB	N4.54:\$1	39.5k to 42k (Protest/NCL Dissolved) 6%
1 Jan 1989		\$33.2/bbl IBB	N7.39:\$1	42k to 60k (Private Cars) 43%
19 Dec. 1989		\$33.2/bbl IBB	N7.39:\$1	42k to 60k (All Cars) 43%
6 Mar. 1991		\$33.4/bbl IBB	N8.04:\$1	60k to 760k 16%
8 Nov. 1993		\$26.1/bbl Shonekan	N17.30:\$1	70k to N5 (Protest/Coup) 614%
22 Nov. 1993		\$26.1/bbl Abacha	N17.30:\$1	N5 to N3.25 35%
2 Oct. 1994		\$23.8/bbl Abacha	N22.33:\$1	3.25 to N15 (Protest) 362%
4 Oct. 1994		\$23.8/bbl Abacha	N22.33:\$1	N15 to N11 (NLC Dissolved) -27%
1995-1998		\$24.7/bbl Abacha	N21.89:\$1	N11 retained despite fall in oil price/formed
		N21.89:\$1	PTF to calm nerves on use of excess proceeds	
20 Dec. 1998		\$16.4/bbl Abdusalami	N21.89:\$1	N11 to N25 (Protest) 127%
6 Jan. 1999		\$22.3/bbl Abdusalami	N21.89:\$1	N25 to N20 (Protest) -20%
1Jan. 2000		\$35.8/bbl OBJ	N85.98:\$1	N20 to N30 (Protest) 50%
13 Jan. 2000		\$35.8/bbl OBJ	N85.98:\$1	N30 to N22 -
27%				
1 Jan. 2002		\$28.5/bbl OBJ	N113.0:\$1	N22 to N26 18%

23 Jun. 2003	\$33.9/bbl		N127.0:\$1	N26 to N34	31%
		OBJ			
2003	\$33.9/bbl		N127.0:\$1	N34 to N40	18%
		OBJ			
2004	\$44.8/bbl		N130.0:\$1	N40 to N45	13%
		OBJ			
27 May 2007	\$69.5/bbl		N125.0:\$1	N65 to N70 (Protest)	
	8%	OBJ			
2007	\$69.5/bbl		N125.0:\$1	N70 to N65 (Due to Protest)	-7%
		Yar'adua			
1 Jan. 2012	\$90/bbl		N165.0:\$1	N65 to N141 (Protest)	
	117%	GEJ			
16 Jan. 2012	\$90/bbl		N165.0:\$1	N141 to N97 (Due to Protest)	-
	31%	GEJ			

Punchof8th January2012or<http://www.punchng.com/politics/the-many-intrigue-of-fuel-price-protests/>

VII. QUESTIONNAIRE DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section deals with the presentation and analysis of the data collected the use of questionnaires. Basically, the use of tabulation and percentages were amply employed in the presentation and analysis. Questions entertained within the questionnaire were divided into two categories for purposes of analysis. The first category of such questions probed into the effects of fuel subsidy on the cost of living of the people while the second category dealt with influences of such fuel subsidy policy measure on crime rate within the area.

Table 1: Sex/Gender Distribution

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MALE	35	58.3
FEMALE	25	41.7
TOTAL	60	100.0

The presentation above shows that the Male respondents outnumbered their Female counterpart as indicated on the Table. 58.3% of the questionnaires were distributed to male while 41.7% of the entire questionnaire went to the female.

Table 2: Class of Employment Distribution

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE	20	33.3
ARTISAN/SELF EMPLOYED	20	33.3
UNEMPLOYED YOUTH	20	33.3
TOTAL	60	100.0

The distribution above shows that there is even distribution of the questionnaire to all forms of employment status in the area, ranging from government employee which is 33.3% of the questionnaire to Artisan/self-employed (33.3%) and the unemployed youth (33.3%) so as to be able to have a balanced report of the real impact of the subsidy measure from these categories of people within the area.

Table 3: Distribution by Length of Stay in the area:

LENGTH OF STAY IN THE AREA	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
BELOW 1yr	10	16.7
1 – 5 Yrs	20	33.3
6Yrs & Above	30	50.0
TOTAL	60	100.0

It is clear from the presentations above that respondents who have stayed in the area below one year have the least number of questionnaires distributed to them (16.7%) while residents within the area who have stayed within 1-5 years have 33.3% portion of the questionnaire distributed to them. This figure is higher than that of those who have stayed below one year in the area while this percentage is still equally lower than that of those who have stayed in the area between 6years and above (50%).

Table 4: Views of respondents on the effect of subsidy removal policy on the cost of living:

REMOVAL OF SUBSIDY POLICY BRINGS UNTOLD INFLATION ON THE COSY OF LIVING	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
STRONGLY AGREE	50	83.0
AGREE	9	15.0
DISAGREE	1	1.7
STRONGLY DISAGREE	-	-
TOTAL	60	100.0

Analysis above confirms that a greater number of the people in the area cannot hide their feelings through the sample survey that removal of fuel subsidy as a government decision has brought untold hardship and unguided inflation on their cost of living and thereby making things very difficult for them. The percentage of these respondents who agree strongly to the hardship influence is 83.3% while another set of respondents accumulating to 15% of the total respondents equally agree to the painful impact of the policy. About 1.7% of the respondent which is just one person out of the entire sixty (60) sampled respondent disagree that removal of fuel subsidy has badly influence the cost of living.

Table 5: Views of respondents on the effect of subsidy removal policy on crime rate:

REMOVAL OF SUBSIDY POLICY WOULD INCREASE THE CRIME RATE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
STRONGLY AGREE	41	66.7%
AGREE	15	25.0
DISAGREE	4	6.6
STRONGLY DISAGREE	-	-
TOTAL	60	100.0

Analysis above still largely maintains that there is a strong correlation between crime up-surge in the area consequent upon fuel subsidy removal policy of the government. From the survey therefore, about 66.7% of the entire respondents which is obviously way off the pass mark strongly agree that crime has been on the increase as one of the attendant consequences of subsidy removal. These respondents' submission were still equally corroborated by another set of the respondents, about 25% of such who agree to increase in criminal activities as a result of the policy implementation. While a paltry 6.6% which are barely four (4) respondents disagree with this fact with another 1.7% respondent, which was just one (1) person corroborating them by strongly disagreeing with the submission?

VIII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the course of this study, some findings emanated, directing attention to some key issues that form the bane of discussion within the study:

First, that the Nigerian populace is helpless at this fuel subsidy removal policy.

Second, that government could have rather looked inwards for possible alternative measures to the policy considering the hard experiences of the ordinary people in relation to the policy implementation.

Third, that the various emanating issues on the said subsidy eventually pointed at the fact that the government was rather subsidizing individual sacred cows within the system since the bulk of the subsidy finance goes into their private purse.

Lastly, the survey result and other field experiences inform without reservation that both the rate of crime and inflation within the country which is possibly parading the largest number of unemployed population is still alarming.

XI. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings in the course of this study, it would be in order to posit that:

(i) Subsidy is meant to be an economic benefit (such as a tax allowance or duty rebate) or financial aid (such as a cash grant or soft loan) provided by a government to: (a) support a desirable activity (such as export) and (b) keep prices of goods and services low within the society but it is obvious within the research study that governments in Nigeria both present and past have no serious interest in the people's welfare.

(ii) That there are no significant policy measures by the government so far to ameliorate and cushion the suffering of the people since the draconic policy implementation of removal of subsidy took effect.

(iii) Since the government has been paying the bulk of the subsidy fee into some individual's pockets for years before now from the hard earned resources of the ordinary people, it then means that the government of Nigeria has been robbing the poor to enrich the rich. Hence, widening the poverty gap between the 'have' and the 'have not.'

(iv) Finally, that the same government is rather becoming complacent countering the crime effect/criminal activities as fall outs of the subsidy removal policy which she insisted has to be implemented.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS/POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Having considered a range of issues on the subsidy removal and crime effect in Nigeria, the following recommendations/solutions become relevant:

- First, the government/policy makers should be made to know that the essence of governance is the smile such government is able to paste on the faces of its citizenry. More so, the relevance of such government equally lies on the welfare it could provide for the people. Knowing that governments all over the world prioritized the welfare of its people first above all other considerations. Since one of the primary functions of the government is to ensure the people's welfare, hence, shouldering the responsibility of subsidy should have been one of such ways for the government to demonstrate this.

- Second, government has since been wobbling and fumbling on so many causes of fraud that eventually trailed the removal of subsidy policy. Hence, it should be well communicated to the relevant authorities that the end result of masses abandonment to service a few within any society usually lead to revolution. Measures should therefore be taken by the current government to prioritize the interest of the people.

- Third, since the government was determined to take such decision of removing fuel subsidy despite counter agitations, it should therefore be proactive in measuring up to the crime challenge of the subsidy.

- Fourth, the social welfare measures options such as purchase of government owned buses to reduce the peoples' transportation difficulties and, price fixing instrument/mechanism of the government could be considered to checkmate marketers who may tend to capitalize on the policy effect to cause unrealistic inflation within the society.

- Finally, government should swing its door open to foreign aid and canvass for it since it currently tends to be struggling with meeting the basic needs of its people.

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Appendix

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RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

This is a research survey on the topic: Subsidy Removal and Crime Effect in Nigeria (a case study of Nyanyan in Abuja)

I am assuring you that any information provided in the course of this research survey would be treated in confidence and used strictly for the purpose of this study.

Thanking you for your time and anticipated response.

Objective of the Survey: The questionnaire is designed to sample opinion on the effect of fuel subsidy removal on individuals within the society and to equally examine the likely crime effect this policy would bring about.

Please tick below as appropriate in the boxes provided against each question.

Personal Data:

a. 25-50
51 & above

b. Sex: Male
Female

c. Self Employed Category: Govt. Employee
 Applicant

d. Length of stay in the Area: Below 1yr 1 –
5yrs 6 & Above

Research Questions (Part A):

- 1. Are you aware of the subsidy programme of the government currently?
a. Yes b. No
- 2. Do you think such a policy would have any direct negative influence on the cost of living?
a. Yes b. No
- 3. Do you think such a policy is very timely and well acceptable by the people?
a. Yes b. No
- 4. What nature of untold difficulties do you think this policy must have accrued on the ordinary people, especially regarding their mobility, comment freely?

Research Questions (Part B):

S/No	Question(s)	Options			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5.	Removal of fuel subsidy would lead to high cost of transportation?				
6.	Unemployment couple with removal of fuel subsidy would bring hardship on the people?				
7.	Removal of subsidy would cause inflation that could trigger social reaction and breakdown of law and order?				

8. In the course of the people's demonstration against the decision of the government to step up the price of fuel, what is your opinion on the police's possibility of trying to arrest and detain such rioters as a result of such action?

Research Questions (Part C):

S/No	Question(s)	Options			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9.	Subsidy removal would lead to increase in bribery and corruption in the society?				
10.	Subsidy removal would increase criminal activities such as forgery, touting and racketeering?				
11.	Subsidy removal would inform the rate of school drop-outs?				

12. Suggest measures government could adopt to stem the crime effects of this inflation driven policy, comment freely?