



A Case Study of the 2012 Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Nigerian Citizens in Jalingo Town of Taraba State

Abstract

Fuel subsidy has historically served as an important economic policy in Nigeria because of the country's dependence on petroleum products for transportation, electricity generation, trade and household survival. However, the decision of the Federal Government under the administration of Goodluck Jonathan to remove fuel subsidy in January 2012 generated widespread protests and public dissatisfaction across the country, including Jalingo town. This article examined the impact of the 2012 fuel subsidy removal on residents of Jalingo town in Taraba State, with particular focus on its economic, social and environmental implications. It explained the historical development of fuel subsidy in Nigeria, analysed the political and economic rationale behind the subsidy removal, investigated residents' reactions to the policy, and assessed its economic, social and environmental effects on the town. The article adopted primary and secondary methods of data collection, including oral interviews with residents, transport operators, traders, students, civil servants and small business owners. The findings showed that the policy negatively affected low-income households, traders, students, civil servants, transport operators and small business owners. Many residents adopted coping mechanisms such as reducing household expenditure, adjusting transportation patterns, relying on communal savings systems and shifting to alternative energy sources. The article concluded that although government justified the subsidy removal on grounds of economic reform and fiscal sustainability, the immediate consequences created severe hardship for ordinary residents of Jalingo town.

Keywords: Fuel subsidy removal; Jalingo; Occupy Nigeria; household welfare; economic reform; transportation cost; palliatives.

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Introduction

The removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria has long been one of the most contentious issues in the country's political and economic history. The Nigerian state adopted fuel subsidies as a policy instrument to ensure that petroleum

products remained affordable for the general population. The intention was to shield citizens from sudden increases in fuel prices caused by fluctuations in the international oil market and to promote social stability in a country marked by widespread poverty and limited

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industrial capacity. Over the years, fuel subsidies became more than an economic policy; they were widely perceived by Nigerians as a form of social support from government, especially in the absence of reliable public services such as affordable transport, stable electricity supply and comprehensive social welfare systems.

For many citizens, cheap fuel helped reduce the cost of transport, food distribution and small-scale business operations, thereby supporting daily survival and economic activity. The history of fuel subsidies in Nigeria dates back to the 1970s, when they were introduced to shield citizens from the volatility of global oil prices. By 2012, however, the federal government argued that the subsidy regime had become wasteful, claiming it cost the nation over ₦1.3 trillion in 2011 alone. Concerns over the sustainability of the fuel subsidy system intensified because the regime was increasingly described as financially burdensome and riddled with corruption, inefficiency and abuse by marketers and officials.

On January 1, 2012, the Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency announced the immediate cessation of the subsidy, causing the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit to rise from ₦65 to approximately ₦141 per litre. In Jalingo, the capital of Taraba State, the impact was immediate. Unlike the industrial hubs of the South, Jalingo's economy was primarily driven by civil service, small-scale trade, informal transport and

agrarian exchange. The town served as a transit point for agricultural produce from Taraba's rural farms to other parts of the North. The sudden hike in fuel prices therefore paralysed the transport sector and increased the cost of moving people, food and goods.

The resulting Occupy Nigeria protests in Jalingo were not merely political; they were a survivalist response to an overnight threat to residents' food security and mobility. While extensive academic literature exists on the economic implications of the policy for Nigeria as a whole, there remains a significant gap in research on its localised effects on smaller urban centres such as Jalingo. This article addresses that gap by documenting the impact of the 2012 fuel subsidy removal through the lived experiences of residents of Jalingo during that turbulent year.

The main aim of this article is to examine the impact of fuel subsidy removal on Nigerian citizens in Jalingo town, Taraba State, in 2012. Specifically, it explains the concept of fuel subsidy removal as it occurred in Nigeria in 2012, examines the effects of the policy on transportation, household expenditure and small business operations, assesses government responses and intervention measures, and analyses the coping and survival strategies adopted by residents.

Scope, Methodology and Significance

The geographical scope of this study is strictly confined to Jalingo town, the capital of Taraba State. Although fuel

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subsidy removal affected the entire country, Jalingo was chosen because it serves as the commercial and administrative nerve centre of Taraba State and relies heavily on fuel-powered transport and informal economic activities. The chronological scope is limited to 2012, covering the period from the initial announcement in January to the gradual stabilisation of prices by December. This narrow time frame enabled a focused analysis of the immediate impact of subsidy removal on residents during the crisis period.

Methodologically, the article adopts a qualitative historical case-study approach. It relies on oral interviews and documentary sources to reconstruct how residents experienced the 2012 subsidy removal at the local level. Primary data were drawn from oral interviews with Jalingo residents who were active during the period, including transport union officials, market women, civil servants, traders, students and small business owners. These oral testimonies were treated as historical evidence because they provided direct accounts of transport difficulties, market adjustments, household pressure and public perception during the crisis.

Secondary sources included textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, government publications and relevant reports. The interview evidence was interpreted alongside these written sources in order to reduce overdependence on personal memory and to strengthen the reliability of the

analysis. This was necessary because documented statistical data on 2012 market prices at the local government level were limited. The study therefore combined documentary evidence with local oral accounts to capture both the policy background and the human experience of the crisis.

The significance of the study is both academic and practical. Academically, it contributes to History and International Relations by shifting attention from centre-based narratives to periphery-based historical experience. By documenting the 2012 crisis from the perspective of Jalingo, the study ensures that the experiences of Lagos or Abuja do not overshadow those of the North-East. Practically, the findings provide insights for policymakers by showing how national economic reforms translate into everyday hardship in smaller urban centres with weak social protection systems.

Conceptual and Literature Background

Fuel subsidy removal is the withdrawal of government financial support intended to lower the market price of Premium Motor Spirit. Sanusi Lamido Sanusi defines it as a fiscal reform aimed at eliminating price distortions and redirecting public funds from consumption to infrastructure investment. In this study, it refers specifically to the January 1, 2012 policy shift that raised Nigeria's pump price from ₦65 to over ₦140, ending a decades-long regime of government-funded price caps. Socio-

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economic activities refer to the interconnected social and economic practices, such as trading, farming, transport and labour, that support community survival and development.

Transportation cost is the total expenditure required to move people and goods from one location to another. In Jalingo, it refers particularly to fares charged by commercial motorcycles, taxis and minibuses, which served as the primary modes of transport for residents and agricultural produce during the 2012 fuel crisis. Food prices refer to the market value of essential commodities, including staples such as yams, maize, rice, beans and vegetables in the Jalingo Main Market. Household welfare refers to the quality of life of Jalingo families and whether they were forced to reduce meals, schooling, healthcare access or social participation due to inflation.

The 2012 fuel subsidy removal sparked extensive academic inquiry. Existing scholarship may be grouped into three themes: the political economy of the subsidy regime, the socio-economic effects on urban centres, and the regional peculiarities of the Nigerian North-East. Akin Iwayemi argues that subsidy encouraged inefficient consumption and stifled investment, but his focus is largely on national economic indicators such as gross domestic product, budget deficits and public expenditure. Yusuf Bala notes that the subsidy was originally a social stabiliser that became unsustainable following global economic fluctuations, while Nnimmo Bassey and Chibuzo

Nwoke draw attention to external economic pressures and the failure to maintain functional refineries despite Nigeria's status as an oil-producing country.

Adeola Adenikinju shows how transport costs disproportionately affect low-income groups, while John Adeoti explains the multiplier effect of fuel price hikes in a road-reliant economy. Abubakar Momoh describes the 2012 unrest as a manifestation of poverty-induced anger, and Sola Olorunyomi documents widespread protests, survival strategies and public anger among urban poor populations. Samuel Egwu highlights that the North-East faces unique challenges due to its distance from coastal ports, while Michael Ogah notes that Jalingo functions as a transit hub for agricultural produce where fuel hikes squeezed the margins of local traders.

B. J. Takaya observes that the socio-political climate of Taraba made the economic hardship of 2012 even more volatile. Onyishi et al. argue that the subsidy reinvestment programme suffered from politicisation, while Uzoma Okeke suggests that government failed to account for the lack of mass transit in northern towns. David Yerima provides a localised critique, stating that palliatives were almost invisible in Jalingo. Ibrahim Muhammad concludes that reforms without safety nets are unsustainable in Nigeria. This article builds on these insights by using oral interviews with Jalingo residents to assess whether

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government palliatives actually reached the people and reduced their hardship.

Historical Perspective of Fuel Subsidy in Nigeria

The discovery and commercialisation of petroleum transformed Nigeria's economic, political and social structure. Since crude oil became the backbone of the Nigerian economy in the late 1950s, successive governments have relied heavily on petroleum revenues for national development, foreign exchange earnings and fiscal sustainability. Alongside this dependence, fuel subsidy emerged as a policy mechanism designed to make petroleum products affordable for citizens. Over time, however, the subsidy system evolved from a welfare-oriented policy into one of the most controversial and politically sensitive issues in Nigeria's contemporary history.

Oil exploration in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era. Initial exploration activities began in 1908 when the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation commenced operations in the coastal areas of present-day Ondo State. Commercial discovery of crude oil was achieved in 1956 at Oloibiri in present-day Bayelsa State by Shell-BP. This discovery marked a turning point in Nigeria's economic history. In 1958, Nigeria exported its first shipment of crude oil, and by independence in 1960, oil production had become increasingly significant to the national economy.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, agriculture remained important, but the

Nigerian Civil War and the oil boom of the 1970s accelerated the country's dependence on petroleum revenues. Nigeria's accession to the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in 1971 further consolidated the country's position within the global oil industry. In the same period, government increased its participation in oil operations by establishing the Nigerian National Oil Corporation, which later became part of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation.

The emergence of fuel subsidy in Nigeria is closely linked to government intervention in the petroleum sector during the 1970s. Fuel subsidy refers to the financial assistance provided by government to reduce the retail price of petroleum products below actual market cost. The policy was initially introduced as a social welfare measure to ensure affordable energy and promote economic stability. Since petrol, diesel and kerosene are central to transportation, electricity generation and industrial activities, government considered price control necessary to protect citizens from inflationary pressure.

Economic challenges in the 1980s, including falling global oil prices, external debt and fiscal crisis, made the policy increasingly difficult to sustain. The Structural Adjustment Programme of 1986 brought renewed pressure from international financial institutions for market-oriented reforms, including subsidy reduction. Yet Nigerian governments found subsidy removal

politically risky because fuel prices directly affected the cost of living. Any attempt to increase fuel prices often triggered protests, labour strikes and public unrest.

The paradox of Nigeria's fuel subsidy became more evident in the 1990s and 2000s. Although Nigeria was one of Africa's largest crude oil producers, the country increasingly relied on imported refined petroleum products due to the collapse and inefficiency of domestic refineries. This significantly increased the cost of maintaining subsidies because government had to pay the difference between international import prices and regulated domestic prices. The system also became associated with large-scale corruption and financial mismanagement, including false subsidy claims and collusion between officials and marketers.

By 2011, the Nigerian government reportedly spent over ₦1 trillion annually on fuel subsidies, creating significant pressure on public finances. The administration of President Goodluck Jonathan argued that subsidy payments were unsustainable and hindered national development. Consequently, on January 1, 2012, government announced the removal of fuel subsidy, leading to an immediate increase in petrol prices from ₦65 to about ₦141 per litre. The announcement triggered widespread protests across major Nigerian cities, popularly known as the Occupy Nigeria movement.

Forms of Fuel Subsidy and the Jalingo Context

Fuel subsidies take different forms depending on a country's objectives, structure and economic policies. Direct fuel subsidy refers to explicit government payments that reduce the market price of petroleum products for consumers. Under this arrangement, government pays the difference between the actual importation or production cost of fuel and the official selling price fixed for domestic consumption. In Nigeria, direct subsidy became prominent because government regulated the retail price of Premium Motor Spirit below international market rates and reimbursed marketers for the price differential.

Indirect fuel subsidy occurs when government provides support to the petroleum sector through mechanisms that do not involve direct cash payments to consumers. These may include tax waivers, foreign exchange concessions, subsidised loans, reduced import duties, or government-funded infrastructure for oil companies and marketers. Consumer subsidy refers specifically to interventions aimed at reducing the price paid by final consumers. Nigeria's subsidy regime primarily functioned as a consumer subsidy because government sought to maintain low petrol prices for households, transport operators and small businesses.

Producer subsidy refers to financial or economic assistance provided to oil producers, refiners or petroleum

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marketers to encourage production, refining or distribution activities. Pre-tax subsidy occurs when petroleum products are sold below the actual supply cost before taxes are applied, while post-tax subsidy refers to situations where government fails to impose adequate taxes on petroleum products to account for environmental costs and other negative externalities. Cross-subsidy occurs when revenues from one product, sector or group are used to offset the cost of subsidising another. In Nigeria, crude oil export earnings historically helped sustain subsidised petrol prices.

Jalingo occupies an important position in northeastern Nigeria. Before the 2012 fuel subsidy removal, the city functioned primarily as an administrative, commercial and agricultural centre, with much of its economic structure dependent on government activities, small-scale trading, transport services and agrarian production. The informal sector played a central role in sustaining livelihoods. Petty traders, artisans, motorcycle operators, food vendors, tailors, mechanics and small-scale entrepreneurs formed a large segment of the working population, making households vulnerable to fluctuations in transportation and commodity prices.

Transportation was a crucial component of socio-economic life in Jalingo. Commercial motorcycles, popularly known as okada, alongside taxis and minibuses, served as the main means of urban transportation. Since fuel prices directly influenced fares, affordable

petroleum products were essential to the daily mobility of workers, students, traders and farmers. Electricity supply in Jalingo before 2012 was also unreliable, forcing shops, cybercafés, pharmacies, restaurants, water suppliers and small businesses to depend on generators. These structural conditions explain why subsidy removal generated widespread concern and economic anxiety among residents.

Political and Economic Rationale for the 2012 Removal

The removal of fuel subsidy in January 2012 was driven by both economic and political considerations. Successive Nigerian governments had long recognised the increasing financial burden of maintaining fuel subsidies, yet many administrations hesitated to remove the policy due to its political sensitivity and the likelihood of public resistance. Under the administration of Goodluck Jonathan, the federal government presented subsidy removal as a necessary reform aimed at restructuring the petroleum sector, reducing corruption, improving governance and redirecting national resources toward development projects.

One major rationale was the desire to reduce the fiscal burden of subsidy payments. Government maintained that excessive spending on subsidies reduced funds available for education, healthcare, infrastructure and job creation. The Jonathan administration also justified the removal as part of a broader agenda of deregulating the downstream petroleum

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sector. Government argued that continued subsidy payments discouraged investment in local refining, contributed to fuel scarcity and weakened petroleum-sector efficiency.

Another important rationale was the fight against corruption within the subsidy regime. Over the years, the system became associated with fraud, financial mismanagement and abuse by oil marketers and public officials. The report of the House of Representatives Ad Hoc Committee on Fuel Subsidy Management exposed large-scale irregularities, including billions of naira lost through false subsidy claims and manipulation of import records. Government therefore defended subsidy removal as an attempt to dismantle corruption networks that benefited from the system.

The Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme was introduced as a mechanism for utilising savings from subsidy removal to finance public infrastructure and social welfare projects. According to government, funds previously spent on subsidies would be redirected toward road construction, public transportation, maternal healthcare, youth employment and poverty reduction. However, many citizens doubted whether these promised benefits would materialise at the local level.

Economically, the federal government justified removal on grounds of fiscal sustainability. By the late 2000s and early 2010s, the cost of sustaining the subsidy

regime had risen due to increasing domestic fuel consumption, dependence on imported refined petroleum products and global oil-price fluctuations. However, critics argued that the immediate increase in fuel prices would worsen inflation and deepen poverty among low-income households. In Jalingo, the consequences were particularly significant because many residents relied on fuel-powered transportation and generators for daily economic activities.

Occupy Nigeria and the Reaction of Jalingo Residents

The Nigerian government's removal of fuel subsidy on January 1, 2012 sparked widespread protests and demonstrations across the country. The decision, which led to an immediate increase in petrol price from ₦65 to about ₦141 per litre, triggered intense economic and political reactions from Nigerians who viewed the policy as harsh and insensitive to prevailing socio-economic realities. The nationwide protests that followed became popularly known as the Occupy Nigeria movement. The movement represented one of the largest civilian-led protest actions in Nigeria's democratic history and reflected widespread dissatisfaction with governance, corruption, unemployment and economic hardship.

In Jalingo, residents reacted strongly to the subsidy removal and the resulting increase in fuel prices. Although the town did not experience protests on the same scale as Lagos or Abuja, it witnessed demonstrations, public criticism and

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growing economic anxiety. The reaction was shaped by Jalingo's socio-economic structure, which relied heavily on transportation, informal trading, civil service employment and fuel-powered electricity generation.

Commercial transportation operators were among the most affected. Motorcycle riders, taxi drivers and bus operators increased transport fares almost immediately following the rise in petrol prices. Since many residents depended on commercial transportation for daily movement to workplaces, schools, markets and government offices, the increase created widespread hardship. Workers and students found it increasingly difficult to afford transport expenses, while traders experienced declining patronage due to reduced consumer spending power.

Market women and petty traders also expressed dissatisfaction because of rising food prices and operational costs. Agricultural products transported from surrounding rural communities became more expensive due to higher transport charges. Consequently, prices of rice, maize, beans, vegetables and yams increased significantly within local markets. Civil servants criticised the policy because salaries remained largely unchanged despite a sharp increase in living expenses, while students feared that the policy would negatively affect access to education.

Although protests in Jalingo remained relatively peaceful, there was visible

tension and economic uncertainty during the peak of the Occupy Nigeria movement. Labour unions within the state participated in nationwide strikes organised by the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress. Government offices, banks and some commercial activities were temporarily disrupted. The movement eventually forced the federal government to partially reverse its decision, and on January 16, 2012, President Goodluck Jonathan announced a reduction in the pump price from ₦141 to ₦97 per litre following negotiations with labour unions and public pressure.

Impact Assessment in Jalingo

The interview evidence suggests that implementation of the subsidy removal in Jalingo was perceived as sudden, poorly communicated and insufficiently sensitive to local realities. A majority of interviewees indicated that they were not adequately informed before the policy change. Dr Kyaru described the policy as severe, reflecting widespread dissatisfaction. This finding aligns with the nationwide protests observed during the period and suggests that Jalingo residents shared similar feelings of frustration and distrust toward government, even where physical protest activity was limited.

The first major economic impact was the increase in transportation costs. Since Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on road transport, higher fuel prices automatically raised fares for commuters

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and logistics costs for businesses. In Jalingo, where the movement of goods from rural farming communities into urban markets depended largely on petrol-powered transport, the effect was particularly severe. Traders paid more to move farm produce, and these costs were passed on to consumers. Mrs Matakhi, a trader, indicated that transportation costs increased significantly after the subsidy removal, while Mr Amos noted that fare increases directly affected prices of goods in local markets.

The increase in transportation costs affected workers and students who relied on public transport for daily movement. Many civil servants, traders and students in Jalingo found it difficult to maintain normal routines because a greater portion of their income was spent on transportation. Mrs Esther, a civil servant, reduced the frequency of her movements and sought alternative means of transport to cut costs. Mr Patrick, a commercial driver, stated that drivers adjusted fares in response to fuel-price fluctuations, creating instability and uncertainty in the transport sector.

A second economic impact was inflation in food and essential commodities. Fuel is a major input in production and distribution chains. As transportation costs increased, prices of food, sachet water, household goods and services also rose. For low-income earners in Jalingo, this reduced purchasing power and deepened financial hardship. Families with limited income struggled to maintain previous feeding patterns and

were often forced to reduce the number or quality of meals consumed daily. Mrs Rhoda indicated that her household substituted certain food items with cheaper alternatives in order to cope with the increasing cost of living.

Small and medium-scale enterprises were also affected. Businesses that relied on fuel-powered generators due to unreliable electricity experienced higher operating costs. In Jalingo, where shops, salons, cybercafés and small production businesses depended on generators, profitability declined as owners either absorbed additional costs or increased prices. Mr Israel Tackie explained that he had to spend extra money on generator fuel, which increased operational costs. Some businesses responded by raising service charges, reducing operating hours or temporarily suspending operations because they could not sustain rising costs.

Beyond economic effects, the subsidy removal had social consequences. Citizens viewed subsidy as one of the few direct benefits received from government, and its sudden removal without adequate palliative measures sparked anger and distrust. As fuel prices rose, low-income households struggled to afford transportation, food and healthcare. In Jalingo, where many families depended on fixed salaries or informal trade, the policy translated into reduced welfare and greater vulnerability. Social participation also declined as residents reduced attendance at events, ceremonies

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and communal activities due to limited resources.

The policy affected education and community well-being. Higher transport fares made commuting more difficult for students and teachers, while families facing rising costs often prioritised immediate survival over educational expenses. Miss Faith, a student at the time, stated that she and other students skipped extracurricular activities such as sports to save costs. The removal also widened public distrust of government institutions. Dr Bashir believed that ordinary citizens were being asked to bear the burden of reform while political leaders and influential individuals continued to benefit from public resources.

Government intervention measures were widely perceived as ineffective at the local level. The majority of interviewees reported not benefiting from any relief programme and did not think the measures were effective. Some informants were unaware of any government intervention. According to Mr Amos, many residents did not even know that government had provided palliatives to help citizens. Only a few informants reported receiving assistance, suggesting a clear disconnection between policy intention at the national level and actual outcomes in Jalingo.

Informants suggested that government could have acted differently. Mr Hammawa Yohanna argued that subsidy removal should have been gradual rather

than sudden, with citizens and the economy adequately prepared. Dr Bashir Bawuro emphasised transparency, monitoring and evaluation, and the appointment of corruption-free individuals to handle relief distribution. Mr Shinkom Apumukong highlighted the need for practical alternatives before implementation, including subsidised transport, soft loans for small businesses, food relief and visible investment in roads, electricity, water supply, health and education.

The environmental impact was indirect but important. Economists argue that subsidy removal can reduce excessive fuel consumption by encouraging more efficient energy use. In Nigeria, however, the immediate effect was more complex because electricity supply remained unreliable and households and businesses continued to rely on petrol and diesel generators. Higher fuel prices did not eliminate generator use; they made energy access more expensive. Mrs Rhoda affirmed that she shifted toward firewood and charcoal because of the high cost of fuel, and many residents did the same. This created environmental concerns because increased use of firewood and charcoal can contribute to deforestation and indoor air pollution.

Coping Mechanisms and Survival Strategies

The removal of fuel subsidy produced severe socio-economic consequences for low-income households and urban populations dependent on fuel for transportation, electricity generation and

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commercial activities. In Jalingo, the sudden increase in petrol prices significantly affected the cost of living and placed pressure on household incomes. Residents were therefore forced to adopt coping mechanisms and survival strategies to manage rising transport costs, rising food prices, unstable electricity supply and declining purchasing power.

One major coping mechanism was reducing household expenditure. Many families adjusted their spending patterns by prioritising food, transportation and accommodation while reducing expenses on clothing, leisure and non-essential goods. Food consumption patterns also changed. Several households reduced the quantity and quality of meals consumed daily and substituted expensive food items with cheaper alternatives. The consumption of staples such as maize, cassava, millet and garri increased among low-income households because these products were more affordable than imported or processed foods.

Transportation adjustment constituted another important survival strategy. Many residents reduced unnecessary travel, walked longer distances, combined trips or relied on shared transportation arrangements to lower costs. Some adopted bicycles, while individuals living near workplaces or schools increasingly relied on trekking. These changes reflected the direct relationship between fuel prices and mobility within urban centres.

Another coping strategy involved expanding informal economic activities and multiple income sources. Many households sought additional means of livelihood to supplement declining incomes and rising expenses. Women engaged more actively in petty trading, food vending, tailoring and small-scale agriculture, while unemployed youth intensified their participation in commercial motorcycle transportation and informal labour. Community markets and roadside trading expanded as residents sought alternative sources of income.

Social support systems and communal assistance also played an important role. Extended family networks, religious organisations, neighbourhood associations and community groups provided various forms of assistance to vulnerable households. Cooperative societies and informal savings groups became important survival mechanisms during the subsidy removal period. Rotating savings schemes, locally known as *adashi* or thrift contributions, helped households access small amounts of capital for business activities or immediate needs.

Residents also adopted energy-saving strategies. Since public electricity supply remained inconsistent, many households and businesses depended heavily on petrol and diesel generators before and after the subsidy removal. The rise in fuel prices forced several households to reduce generator use to cut costs. Businesses shortened operating hours,

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while some households limited generator use to nighttime periods or essential domestic activities. Alternative energy sources such as charcoal, firewood and kerosene stoves became more common among low-income households. These coping mechanisms reflected resilience, but they were temporary and could not fully offset the long-term consequences of rising fuel prices and inflation.

Conclusion

The removal of fuel subsidies in 2012 marked a major turning point in Nigeria's economic and political history, particularly for ordinary citizens who relied heavily on subsidised fuel for daily survival. Although the policy was introduced as part of broader economic reform efforts aimed at reducing government expenditure and improving national development, this article has shown that its effects were deeply felt at the grassroots level, especially in Jalingo town.

The findings reveal that the burden of subsidy removal fell mostly on low-income earners, small business owners, students and other vulnerable groups whose livelihoods depended on affordable transportation and stable living costs. Rather than experiencing immediate economic improvement, many residents faced rising transport fares, food inflation, financial uncertainty and declining living standards. The Jalingo experience demonstrates that national-level economic policies can produce

severe local consequences when adequate support systems are not in place.

Public dissatisfaction was influenced not only by increased fuel prices but also by ineffective communication, poor implementation of palliative measures and widespread distrust of government institutions. Many residents felt excluded from the policy process and believed that the sacrifices demanded of citizens were not matched by accountability and transparency. Ultimately, the article concludes that economic reforms may be necessary for national growth, but they cannot succeed without public trust, proper planning and meaningful support systems capable of protecting vulnerable populations from excessive hardship.

Recommendations

First, before implementing major fuel-pricing reforms, the Federal Government, state governments and local councils should carry out structured public sensitisation through market associations, transport unions, religious institutions, ward heads and community radio. The message should explain the purpose of the reform, the expected price changes, available relief measures and complaint channels. This would reduce panic and improve public understanding at the grassroots level.

Second, intervention measures should be backed by a clear local beneficiary register. In towns such as Jalingo, relief distribution should involve local government officials, civil society organisations, ward representatives,

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transport unions and market associations. Each beneficiary list should be publicly displayed and periodically audited to reduce diversion, political favouritism and corruption.

Third, subsidy reforms that directly affect citizens' welfare should be implemented gradually rather than abruptly. A phased adjustment over a defined period would allow households, transport operators, traders and small businesses to plan around changing fuel prices. During the transition, temporary transport vouchers, food support and soft loans should be targeted at low-income households, students, small traders and transport workers.

Fourth, government should invest in practical alternatives that directly reduce citizens' dependence on expensive fuel. For Jalingo, this should include affordable public transport routes, improved electricity supply for small businesses, support for solar energy adoption, rehabilitation of rural roads used for agricultural transport, and better fuel-supply monitoring to prevent artificial scarcity and black-market price increases.

Finally, future subsidy reforms should be tied to visible local development projects and transparent reporting. Residents are more likely to support reform when promised benefits are measurable and felt directly in their communities. Government should therefore publish regular updates on savings from subsidy reforms, projects funded from those

savings, contractors involved, implementation timelines and community-level impact. For towns such as Jalingo, effective reform should prioritise affordable transportation, electricity, small-business support, food-price stability and grassroots accountability.

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