

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL ON CLASS ATTENDANCE OF PRE-SERVICE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AT KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY, MALETE

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Abstract

Class attendance, either onsite or online remains an important aspect of teachers' training for a successful implementation of special education approaches such as inclusive education. This study investigated the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. A total number of seventy five (75) pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete participated in the study. A-ten item questionnaire was developed by the researcher to elicit responses from the students on their perception of the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance. The data gathered was analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and percentage score, independent sample t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Findings revealed that the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers in training at Kwara State University, Malete was negative ($2.3 < 2.5$). It was also found that there was no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers based on gender ($0.06 < 1.99$; where $p = 0.05$) and levels ($F_{(3,71)} = 1.66 < 2.74$) respectively. The study therefore recommended that government should implement special palliative for pre-service special education teachers. It was also recommended that schools should make class attendance policy flexible and accessible through online and onsite class attendance

Keywords: Fuel Subsidy, Class Attendance, Onsite Classes, Online Classes, Special Education.

Introduction

The removal of fuel subsidies has been a contentious issue in many countries, particularly in Nigeria where such subsidies significantly impact the cost of living and operational expenses for various sectors, educational sector inclusive. Fuel subsidies are financial aids provided by government to lower the cost of fuel for consumers (Scott, 2023 & Corporate Finance Institute, 2023). Concisely, Akinyemi (2017) noted that fuel subsidy is the financial aid granted to autonomous and foremost oil marketers by the government for them to supply their products at a

cheaper rate for the good of the masses. Adesina (2023) asserted that fuel is an essential commodity that affects transportation costs, energy expenses, procurement of goods and products, services and overall operational cost, including the cost of class attendance. Fuel subsidies can therefore lead to increased disposable income for pre-service special education teachers (hereafter refers to as students), which may indirectly affect their ability to attend educational institutions. Subsidies play a key role in making higher education more accessible to the students from low income earners. For instance, fuel subsidy can help reduce the price of schooling down to a level that is more affordable for students from families who are on a tight budget. However, in the context of special education where teachers often require specialised training and resources, any increase in living costs due to subsidy removal could disproportionately affect these students' class attendance.

The Federal Government of Nigeria on 29th day of May, 2023 implemented fuel subsidy removal policy due to an unproductive hike in government expenditure and corruption. The effect of fuel subsidy removal on economy cannot be overemphasised. The World Bank warned that more people would be pushed into poverty in Nigeria (Aro, 2023). This shows that that the removal of fuel subsidy might have a negative impact on the poor Nigerians, pre-service special education teachers inclusive. Okonkwo (2023) itemized the negative effects of fuel subsidy removal on Nigerians. These include: increase in the cost of production, increase in the prices of goods and services, a fall in the standard of living, increase in corruption, increase in transportation cost and education. Adewunmi et al. (2014) in an econometric investigation on the impact of fuel subsidy removal on socio-economic development in Nigeria had earlier discovered that fuel subsidy removal would result in high cost of living in terms of house rent, foods, good and services. It is therefore noteworthy that the cost of living for students, such as hostel accommodation fees both on campus and off-campus, and the cost of food around the school, which are directly affected by fuel subsidy removal, might have an influence on class attendance of students in schools. Although, Aro (2023) reported that the World Bank had suggested palliatives to alleviate the effect of the fuel subsidy removal; the removal of fuel subsidy might have a significant influence on students' ability to attend classes due to its direct effects on transportation and the cost of living. Dike (2023) submitted that the removal of fuel subsidy has had its ripple effect on schools. According to him, hike in transportation costs have increased the cost of goods and services, forcing schools to reassess their budget allocations. This, in turn, has led to potential increases in tuition fees, placing an additional burden on the students already grappling with economic challenges. Students who are commuters may have their class attendance diminished at the removal of fuel subsidy. This is due to the fact that the rising cost of transportation may reduce the students' financial capacities to keep a regular class attendance.

Class attendance is therefore referred to the regular daily students' participation in learning activities organised by the school. According to Adedeji, Mohammed & Ahmed (2020), class attendance is an important factor that influences academic performance of students. Derakhshan, Vahedian, Parnian, Nateghi & Alipour (2022) averred that students who attend classes and interact with lecturers usually improve on their behavior, decisions, and future goals by identifying with the lecturers and modeling their roles. Derakhshan et al. (2022) evinced that students need regular class attendance for them to be highly engaged with classroom activities. Class attendance also assists students in different ways. It clarifies theoretical concepts in the course materials, allows for general and/or group discussions, clear explanation, collaboration and supportive services on topical concepts. Class attendance might also contribute to students' development in terms of self-management, team work, communication skills, friendship skills,

negotiation skills, career development and problem solving skills. These aspects of development are nurtured in an ideal classroom. According to Derakhshan et al. (2022), class attendance avail students the opportunity to fine-tune and practice communication, friendship and literacy skills with application of learning and information technology in class. Consequently, the student's employability will be enhanced.

However, the absence of students from classrooms is a growing problem in tertiary institutions across the nation (Oyedeke, Chime, Akinduyite & Olajubu, 2023). Gathering from researchers' experience at Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo from June 6th, 2023 to February 21st, 2025, it shows that lecturers have recently recorded low attendance of students in their classes. This might adversely affect students' academic performance in school and their employability after graduation. Derakhshan et al. (2022) averred that absence of students from classrooms disrupts the dynamic teaching and learning processes, resulting into poor academic performance among the students. Therefore, the need to improve the qualities of teachers graduating from teachers' training institutions in Nigeria has necessitated a renewed focus on the interaction between the recent fuel subsidy removal and class attendance of pre-service special education teachers. Although, class attendance could be made flexible through online classes for distant learners; few education institutions in Nigeria has been able to implement online classes. A class could be onsite or online based on its location (Humera, 2021). An onsite class refers to the physical environment designed for both educators and trainees to meet face-to-face for educational interactions while an online class refers to the virtual environment where interactions between the students and the lecturer take place via the internet or social media (Humera, 2021). Online classes provides flexibility and leverages technology but onsite classes are still superior because they offer hands-on learning experience, equip students with social skills and employ more accurate assessments (Icoholder, 2022). Therefore, the term class attendance encompasses both onsite class attendance and online class attendance.

Several studies have been conducted recently to investigate the impact of petroleum subsidies removal on the Nigerian economy. For instance, Adewunmi et al. (2014) investigated the impact of fuel subsidy removal on socio-economic development in Nigeria. It was revealed from their study that the deregulation of the downstream sector would ultimately lead to future economic development of the country. Akinyemi (2017) also investigated fuel subsidy removal and environmental quality in Nigeria. The researcher discovered that subsidy removal will only make consumers reduce consumption initially and then increase it later in order to meet their energy demands since there is no better environmentally friendly alternative to petrol. However, literature review showed that none of these studies was directed towards finding out the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of students in higher institution of learning. Hence, this study contributes to the body of literature by investigating the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete.

Statement of the Problem

The effect of the incessant hike in the costs of transportation, education, food, and accommodation is a growing concern among educators. The hikes were blamed on the recent fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. This might also affect the quality and quantity of teachers graduating from high institutions of learning. The number of teachers in training might reduce due to the hike in the cost of education while those already enrolled might experience low class attendance due to the high cost of transportation.

Despite existing literature on the impact of fuel subsidy on socioeconomic and standard of living, there is a notable gap in research specifically focusing on pre-special education teachers. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by exploring the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete.

Research Question

1. What is the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete?

Hypotheses

H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers based on gender.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers based on level.

Methodology

Descriptive survey approach was adopted in this study. A descriptive survey is a study aimed at collecting data, analysing them and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (National Open University of Nigeria, 2012). The population for this study consists of all undergraduate regular pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete. A sample of 75 respondents was randomly selected from the total population of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete. The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire tagged “Perceived Influence of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Class Attendance of Pre-service Special Education Teachers” which was designed by the researchers to elicit the required information from the respondents on the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete. The instrument was divided into two sections – A and B. Section ‘A’ focuses on demographic data of respondents while section ‘B’ contains items on the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers. The content validity of the instrument was achieved using the judgment of experts in test and measurement and special education from the Department of Special Education, Kwara State University, Malete. The data gathered was analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and percentage score, independent sample t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at alpha level of significance.

Results

RQ: What is the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete?

Table 1: Percentage scores and mean showing perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete.

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	MEA N
1	It has been difficult for me to attend classes regularly since the removal of fuel subsidy.	24 (32%)	21 (28%)	18 (24%)	12 (16%)	2.8
2	I could not afford the cost of transportation to class regularly since the removal of fuel subsidy.	21 (28%)	24 (32%)	12 (16%)	18 (24%)	2.6
3	I trek to class whenever I could since the removal of fuel subsidy.	24 (32%)	21 (28%)	18 (24%)	12 (16%)	2.8
4	I have a personal means of transportation which aids my regular class attendance since the removal of fuel subsidy.	-	-	30 (40%)	45 (60%)	1.4
5	The high cost of living since the removal of fuel subsidy does not affect my regular class attendance.	2 (2.7%)	1 (1.3%)	45 (60%)	27 (36%)	1.7
6	Fuel subsidy removal has nothing to do with my regular class attendance.	1 (1.3%)	2 (2.7%)	57 (76%)	15 (20%)	1.9
7	I need to remain in my current hostel for easy regular class attendance.	2 (2.7%)	3 (4%)	58 (77.3%)	12 (16%)	1.9
8	I need to relocate to a nearby hostel for easy regular class attendance.	21 (28%)	24 (32%)	12 (16%)	18 (24%)	2.6
9	The high cost of living since the removal of fuel subsidy has affected my regular class attendance.	21 (28%)	24 (32%)	12 (16%)	18 (24%)	2.6
10	My parent has not been able to support my daily transportation to classes since the removal of fuel subsidy.	24 (32%)	21 (28%)	18 (24%)	12 (16%)	2.8
	Weighted Average					2.3

Table 1 revealed the percentage and mean scores of respondents to items on fuel subsidy removal. The respondents agreed with items 1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10 and disagreed with items 4, 5, 6, and 7. The calculated mean 2.3 was less than the fixed mean 2.5 ($2.3 < 2.5$). This implied that the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete was negative.

H₀ 1: There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete based on gender.

Table 2: Summary of independent sample t-test showing the significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of based on gender.

GROUP	N	MEAN	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	DECISION
MALE	36	28.22	4.63	73	0.06	1.99	NS
FEMALE	39	28.15	4.77				

Sig@0.05

Table 2 revealed the summary of independent sample t-test result on gender difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete. A mean score of 28.22 and standard deviation of 4.63 was reported for male students and a mean score of 28.15 and standard deviation of 4.77 for female counterparts. The degree of freedom was 73, the t_{cal} was 0.06, and the t_{crit} was 1.99 at significant level of 0.05. The observed calculated, t_{cal} (0.06) was less than the critical value, t_{crit} (i.e $0.06 < 1.99$; where $p=0.05$). This implied that there was no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete based on gender. This implied that the perception of male and female students about the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete do not differ. Therefore, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete based on gender was not rejected.

H₀ 2:. There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete based on level.

Table 3: Summary of one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showing the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete based on level.

GROUPS	N	MEAN	SD	Df	F-Cal	F-Crit	Decision
100Level	7	28.57	6.80	74	1.66	2.74	Not Sig.
200Level	28	28.36	4.25				
300Level	20	26.85	5.42				
400Level	20	29.15	3.03				

Sig@0.05

Table 3 revealed the results of one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at

Kwara State University, Malete based on level. A mean score of 28.57 and standard deviation of 6.80 was reported for 100 level students, a mean score of 28.36 and standard deviation of 4.25 was reported for 200 level students, a mean score of 26.85 and standard deviation of 5.42 was reported for 300 level students and a mean score of 29.15 and standard deviation of 3.03 was reported for 400 level students. The F-cal was 1.66, and the critical value was 2.74. The observed calculated value is less than the critical value ($F_{(3,71)} = 1.66 < 2.74$). This implied that there was no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete based on level. This implied that the perception of students of different levels about the influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete do not differ. Therefore, the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teacher's trainees at Kwara State University, Malete based on level was not rejected.

Discussion

Research question revealed a negative influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers, that is, they perceived that fuel subsidy removal has negatively influenced their class attendance in school. This was in line with the assertions of Dike (2023) who asserted that the removal of fuel subsidy has had its ripple effect on schools placing an additional burden on the students already grappling with economic challenges. This finding did not corroborate with Adewunmi, Remy & Iyewumi (2014) who asserted that the deregulation of the downstream sector would ultimately lead to future economic development of the country. The students are facing economic challenges instead of economic development and this is adversely affecting their class attendance in school. Hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete based on gender. This affirmed the postulation of Okonkwo (2023) who postulated that fuel subsidy removal would have negative effects on Nigerians such as increment in the cost of education. The perception of male and female students did not differ probably because they are also Nigerians suffering the same influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance. Although, male students may be able to endure the rigour of trekking to and fro the class; female students may not be able to trek to class from distant hostels. This is in line with Batolomei, Grillone, Di Michelle and Cortesi (2021) who discovered that males possess superior muscular strength than females in relative strength (walking) and power performance. Hypothesis two revealed that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance of pre-service special education teachers at Kwara State University, Malete based on level. This was also in line with the assertions of Dike (2023) who reported that the removal of Fuel Subsidy has had its ripple effect on schools placing an additional burden on the students already grappling with economic challenges. This could be because they are also Nigerians, level of education notwithstanding, suffering the same influence of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the crucial records in education is class attendance which could be onsite or online. The interactions between students and lecturer in an inclusive classroom create a lasting impressive learning experience which eventually leads to an improved academic performance among students. However, there are factors affecting regular class attendance of students which include government policy on fuel subsidy removal. Fuel subsidy removal influences the cost of goods and services including transportation and the cost of living. Invariably, fuel subsidy removal has adversely influenced the class attendance of students' gender and level of education. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- a. The government should implement special palliative for pre-service special education teachers in training and in service to alleviate the negative effect of fuel subsidy removal on class attendance.
- b. Schools should fully implement online classes for all courses except practical ones and make class attendance policy flexible and accessible through monitored onsite and online classes.

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