

AN EXPLORATION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL EFFECTS OF SUBSIDY REMOVAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE IN OKIGWE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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<p>Corresponding Author Okorie O. Ume Ph. D</p> <p>Department of Sociology, Abia State University, Uturu</p> <p>Email: okorie.ume@abiastateuniversity.edu.ng</p> <p>Article History</p> <p>Received: 28 / 02/2025</p> <p>Accepted: 13 / 03/ 2025</p> <p>Published: 16 / 03/2025</p>	<p>Abstract: This study explores the socio-cultural effects of fuel subsidy removal on community life in Okigwe, an area in south-eastern Nigeria. Recently Nigeria's government decision to eliminate fuel subsidies has led to a sharp increase in petroleum products, significantly impacting on household budgets, transportation costs and on businesses. This study seeks to understand the socio-economic and cultural implications for the residents of Okigwe, focusing on tourism, cultural festivals, marriage practices, burial rites/social events, community cohesion and the coping mechanisms adopted to mitigate the impact. With a survey of 400 household members, analysis reveals that, rising petroleum product costs have impact on household income and expenditure as affirmed by over 70.6% of respondents. They noted the cost of transportation has affected ability to attend family and cultural events. While there has been a sharp decline on the participation of cultural festivals and the visitation of tourists outside of the community. Marriage and burial activities are also declining in participation within the communities. The research highlights policy decisions and recommends interventions of Government to harmonize the income levels of the various sectors of the national economy and improve on the minimum wage. Policy makers should draw up new approaches to promote culture and tourism. Government to promote mass transit schemes to alleviate transport burden. Since culture changes, there should be a revision of cultural demands on burial and marriage rites to promote community participation. The cultural changes may lead to cultural drift.</p> <p>Keywords: Community life, Culture, Events, Fuel, Festivals, Subsidy.</p>
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Introduction

Culture as the total way of life of a people or society, is manifested in every facet of individual and community life. Every society is unique in the way and manner she does things which is the product of their history, belief and philosophy which has transcended from their ancestors. Examples are food, dressing, settlement and building materials. Festivals, marriage rites, and burial rites are not left out. Culture however is very dynamic, meaning it changes from time to time because of several factors within and outside of the community. It is important to state here that no culture exist in isolation, constant interaction with other communities infuses some changes. Natural occurrence like climate change or natural disaster also influences a change in culture and behaviour. Economic policies like subsidy removal of fuel has triggered a ripple effect on the personal and community lives of Nigerians and the people of Okigwe in particular.

Fuel subsidy is not unique to Nigeria; it is a policy commonly observed in oil-producing countries worldwide. According to the Centre for Public Policy Alternatives (CPPA, 2012), fuel subsidy is particularly prevalent in oil-producing

nations such as Venezuela, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Burma, Malaysia, Kuwait, China, Taiwan, South Korea, Trinidad and Tobago, and Brunei, as well as in some non-oil-producing countries like Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, among others. In Nigeria, fuel subsidies have been in place since the 1970s, and the average household relies on subsidized oil for domestic and commercial purposes, including transportation, and power generation due to the intermittent supply of public electricity to individuals and small-scale businesses (Manjo, 2023).

Nigeria had two forms of subsidy prior to the inauguration of the Tinubu administration in 2023. The first involved payments to cover the difference between the actual pump prices of petrol, calculated after considering the landing cost and existing margins. The second subsidy covered the cost of transportation for every litre, ensuring uniform petrol prices across the country (Ogundipe, 2013). May 29, 2023, remains a memorable day for many Nigerians, as it was the day President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in his inaugural speech, announced the removal of fuel subsidy. According to Tinubu, the removal of fuel subsidy was necessary to prevent the country from going bankrupt and to pave the way for

economic growth (Angbulu, 2024). However, anticipated benefits of subsidy removal outlined by the President during his inaugural speech are yet to be realized by Nigerians. Instead, economic hardship has become increasingly prevalent on daily basis, this hardship has affected every aspect of the life of every Nigerian.

Adeniran and Adetayo (2016) defined subsidy as any measure that keep prices consumers pay for goods or products below market levels for consumers or for producers above market. According to him, subsidies take different forms. Some subsidies have a direct impact on price. These include grants, tax reductions and exemptions or price controls. Subsidy is known to be a financial assistance provided by the government to individuals or businesses to lower the cost of goods or services. It is a direct or indirect financial support granted by the government to producers or consumers to encourage the production, consumption. Removal therefore means that everyone who uses fuel will pay the full cost as determined by the regulatory body which would be too high for Nigeria whose economy is dependent on fuel.

The practice of fuel subsidy in Nigeria has its root in an attempt to reduce the high cost of living and promote economic stability. However, the financial burden of fuel subsidy on the national budget has led to the current debate and calls for reform (Akinwumi & Ndukwe, 2019). Fuel subsidy removal began in 1970s and became institutionalize in 1977 following the promulgation of the Price Control Act which made it illegal for some product to be sold above the regulated prices. While the concept of subsidy itself is noble, its administration in Nigeria has been plagued with serious allegation of corruption and mismanagement. This has made it difficult for the intended benefit to be actualized. Fuel subsidy is a government discount of the market price of fossil fuel to make consumers pay less than the market price of fuel (Ovaga & Okechukwu, 2022) thirteen years after diesel was deregulated, kerosene subsidy was removed in 2016.

However, the subsidy of Petroleum Motor Spirit has proven to be the biggest of challenges to the manager of the Nigeria economy. The removal of these subsidies is often justified by the need for economic diversification and improved public service funding. Initially it was intended to reduce the effect of fluctuating prices of oil to the global market on the local economy such subsidy has persisted for decades resulting in both economic distortion and of dependence among citizen (Adeoti & Owoaye, 2017). Fuel subsidies which are government interventions aimed at reducing the price of petroleum products and making energy more affordable for the populace, have far-reaching implications across various socio-economic strata. While the government's rationale for subsidy removal typically revolves around freeing up government finances for other developmental projects and reducing corruption, the implications for local communities, particularly in socio-cultural practices, are profound.

Several studies have indicated that removal of fuel subsidy may lead to increase unemployment and poverty level if local business men and women cannot adjust to the new economic reality (Owen & Achiefu 2015). This new economic order leads to cultural realignment as communities are forced to adapt by uttering their traditional practice interaction. For the people of Okigwe, like many Nigeria societies, daily activities often centre's around access to affordable transportation and energy. Studies have shown that sudden price escalation can alter consumer behaviour, leading to reduced participation in communities' event and cultural

practices that require mobility (Ola, 2020). Increase in transportation cost affects every aspect of the economic life; prices of food, transportation in and out of the community, festivals, burial rites and ceremonies, marriages and other traditional activities will suffer low patronage.

Okigwe, a local government area in Imo State, Nigeria, has a rich cultural heritage shaped by its history, geography, and economy. The area has experienced significant economic and social changes since Nigeria's independence in 1960. Okigwe was a major hub for trade and commerce in the region, with the Owerri-Okigwe-Onitsha trade route connecting the area to other parts of Igbo land (Isichei, 1976). During colonial rule, Okigwe's economy was integrated into the global economy, with the British colonial authorities introducing cash crops like cocoa and coffee (Afigbo, 1972). This led to increased economic activity and cultural exchange. Post-colonial Era (1960-1980) Nigeria experienced rapid economic growth, driven by oil exports (Bevan et al., 1988). Okigwe benefited from this growth, with improved infrastructure and social services.

Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) era (1980-1990), through the intervention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) led to economic hardship, including fuel subsidy removal (Adebayo, 1994). This had devastating effects on Okigwe's economy and cultural practices. The federal government's decision to remove fuel subsidy in 2012 further exacerbated economic hardship in Okigwe (Ogbeidi, 2013). The increase in fuel prices affected transportation costs, agricultural production, and small-scale businesses. The removal of fuel subsidy has impacted Okigwe's cultural practices in various ways-reduced participation in traditional festivals and ceremonies (Eke, 2017). Changes in traditional marriage and burial rites (Oyinlola, 2016); decline in traditional crafts and artisanal skills (Talib, 2012); increased migration of youth to urban centres (Waqas, 2015).

Okigwe is one of the major towns in Imo State, Nigeria. It is recognized as the third most populated city in the state after Owerri, the capital and Orlu. It has an estimated population of 132,701 (2006 NPC Census). Okigwe is located on longitude 7.34° and latitude 5.81° and on an elevation of between 120 – 180 metres above sea level. It covers 327.5 km² areas. It is situated along the Port Harcourt, Umuahia – Enugu expressway. The town is usually referred to as an immigrant town, as the highest population is made up of visitors who converge for business opportunities. Traditionally, Okigwe Local Government Area is made up of six autonomous communities, namely; Ezinachi, Ikigwu, Otanzu, Umololo, Ihube and Otan-Chara with numerous villages. The native occupation of the inhabitants is agriculture, specifically palms trees, cassava and vegetables. Politically, Okigwe is the headquarters of Imo North Senatorial District. Okigwe is bounded by the following towns, Local Government Areas and States. On the east Okigwe is bounded by Uturu Community in Abia State; Ihitte/Uboma and Isiala Mbano in Imo State. By the west is Onuimo LGA, Imo State; on the south by Orumba Community of Anambra State/Isuochi Community of Abia State; and on the north by Nonya Community of Abia State.

This study therefore surveys the extent of this distortion to the community life and practice of the people of Okigwe Local Government Area of Imo State.

Statement of the Problem

The removal of fuel subsidy has led to increase in fuel prices, significantly affecting household budgets in Okigwe town.

Residents struggle to afford basic necessities, as the risen cost of transportation is affecting consumer goods. The prevalence economic strain may lead to an increased poverty levels and alter traditional community lives. An Igbo person is known for community membership and promotion of bonds. Attendance to every event is based on transportation, whose cost has immense effect on the socio-cultural lives of the people, especially on their economy, cultural festivals, burial rites and marriage practices. This will therefore affect daily travels to family events, especially the low-income earners that live outside the environs. As individuals face financial pressures from the rising fuel costs, there is an increased risk of social absence from events due to financial stress; reduced community cooperation and supports. Events in due course will decline, weakening social bonds and cultural preservation which could eventually impact on cultural transmission and values on younger generations.

Research Questions

1. How has the fuel subsidy removal affected the economy of households of residents of Okigwe?
2. In what ways has the transportation costs affected attendance to tourism and its profitability in Okigwe?
3. What are the effects of fuel subsidy removal on marriage practices and family relationships in Okigwe?
4. How has the financial stress from fuel increase affected attendance and community support to burial rites amongst residents of Okigwe?
5. What coping strategies are Okigwe households adopting to sustain cultural values and community unity?

Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between fuel subsidy removal and its effect on Okigwe residents.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between transport cost and attendance to tourism.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between fuel subsidy removal and marriage practices.

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between financial stress of fuel increase and attendance to community burial support.

Review of Literature

Fuel subsidy removal and reforms is currently a global issue. Nigeria is aligning with global trends to enhance economic sustainability, but it comes with a number of challenges. This study is contributing to the consequences and strategies adopted by community members to achieve cultural sustainability and the prospect of the future. Therefore, the review is on the multitude of impacts of petroleum subsidy removal either positively or negatively on the economy, social, environment, political and cultural aspects of members of the communities.

Evans et al. (2023) observed that, subsidy removal funds if properly channelled to major social services as education, healthcare and infrastructures could create improvements in the national economy without the negative consequences. On the environmental phase of subsidy removal, Aryanpur et al. (2022); Jewell et al. (2018) identified the benefit of gas emission reduction and efficiency in the economy. On the environmental levels, Olorunfemi (2023) reflected on the carbon emissions and climate change situations. He avers that subsidy will decrease petroleum

consumption, indirectly reducing the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere as pollutants. It brings about cleaner air and positive health and environment. In the view of Babatunde et al. (2019), it is time for diversion into renewable sources of energy, especially solar power, expressing that this will increase investment in other sectors.

The general principle of economics on inflation holds the premise that subsidy removal has the potential to raise the socio-economic lifestyles of the populace, because as fossil prices rise so is the cost of living. This may affect individuals' family resources that were already poor. Osunmuyiwa and Kalfagianni (2017) having examined Nigeria's subsidy reforms noted a dynamics in the energy utilization as it impact on both government revenues and budget, that often result in protests and policy reforms. Bazilian and Onyeji (2012) x-rayed the effects of subsidy removal along with poor power supply that subsidy removal has negative effects on commercial activities in the nation.

Gohari et al. (2018) study on subsidy removal identified increase in fuel prices, which is in multiple effect as prices of goods and transport services propel market cost, thereby raising welfare of the low-income group. In another study, Couharde and Mouhoud (2020) examined subsidy removal on families and income levels and findings proved that subsidy removal is corresponding to higher cost of living and detrimental to the low-income level than any other groups. Ozili and Obiora (2023) reflected on the implications of subsidy removal and concluded that it raises the cost of transportation, vis-à-vis cost of living, which includes healthcare, education, marketing of goods and other services.

Socially, subsidy removal has usually spackled issues in nations nursing the policy. Majekodunmi (2013) noted that politically, removal causes public unrests. Each time subsidy removal is being mentioned, protests must erupt, prompting social chaos, damages to public properties as well as death of citizens. Houeland (2020) noted the involvement of labour unions in protests on subsidy. The policy usually impact much on the vulnerable group, along with the fear of enlarging the social inequality of the population. Rentschler (2016) considered social consequences of subsidy to impact on family welfare and lifestyles, especially the poor population.

Economically, subsidy has a direct impact on the economy. Okwanya et al. (2015) observed in their findings that subsidy changes the prices of consumer goods and lead to inflation. The Central Bank 2023 data on inflation shows inflation rate was 22.41% before subsidy removal, but rose to 22.79% in the month of June, and 24.08% in July of the same year. The cost of food items were 24.82% in May, but rose to 25.25%, June and 26.98% in July. It implies that as transportation cost goes up, so is the delivering of goods and services across the nation. As in Malaysia, Husaini et al. (2019) study revealed that subsidy fluctuations impacted on high changes of prices of goods and services. Subsidy alone does not influence inflation. Babalola and Salau (2020) analysis of subsidy relationship with prices of goods and fuel prices noted other elements as factors equally contributing such as government policies, exchange rate and economic framework.

The culture of a people and quality of life are dependent upon their living standards, income, services, economic objectives, level of education, health outcome, housing, cultural practices, including how and on what they spend their money (Shek, 2020; McGregor & Goldsmith, 1998). A study by Umeji & Eleanya

(2021) on the impact of fuel subsidy on the poor noted that, the lower-class members will be impacted more through high cost of transport fares, high cost of food items and housing.

The theory for the study is Social Ecological Model (SEM) as proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in the 1980s. The theory helps to explain the fact that people are greatly influenced by a range of complex social and environmental influences. SEM considers the interconnectedness of individuals, interpersonal, community, organizational and policy factors that influences behaviour and outcome including subsidy removal (McLeroy et al., 1988). Humans are adaptive to their environments, according to Albuquerque et al. (2019) “humans have developed strategies to favour their survival in different environments” (p. 2). While Faulkner et al. (2018) explained that humans faced with environmental challenges in their socio-ecological systems usually seek means of adaptation.

The fuel subsidy removal as a policy of government exerts both positive and negative influences on both the individual as well as the community. The influences in turn impact on the micro systems of the culture as burial rites, marriage ceremonies and other festivals that attract tourism, thereby creating cultural drift. This can be illustrated in the diagram below.

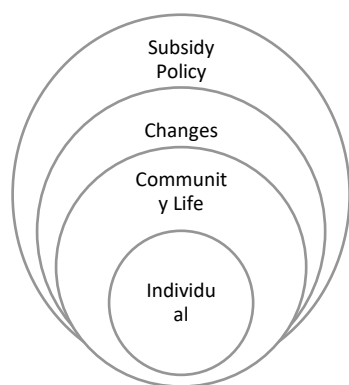


Figure 1. Subsidy and Socio-Cultural Model

Individual: The individual as a member of the community practices its belief associated with oneness in all community cultural activities as a way of life.

Community Life: The community is embedded with its aged long tradition of cultural rites in all that they do in a community living. It is founded on relationship and bonds, handed down to all generations through participation and a reciprocal to one another.

Changes: Policies of government and culture are subject to change and some policies, as the rising cost of transportation has impacted on the ability of community members to visit the community regularly and to participate in cultural activities as a tradition.

Subsidy Policy: The fuel subsidy removal policy has influenced transport cost, which in turn affect attendance to community cultural participation and the individual withdrawal is thereby causing cultural drift.

Fossil subsidy removal is known to mean the process of ending government's financial assistance for fuel regimes in a nation. It is the withdrawal of government support for fuel

consumers. Subsidies are either direct or indirect payment made by the state to organizations and individuals in the petroleum businesses. Direct subsidy implies payment by cash to recipient. Indirect subsidy means other economic benefits through government policies.

A community is a set of people who live together, share the same culture – beliefs, values, communication and cultural calendar. These inherent ways of life distinguished them from other community or people. In all, communities are time-bound with established customs, which becomes the tradition and the community life. It involves social activities – social events, economic, religious and tradition folk plays among a people who reside in a geographical location with the same identity.

Culture is understood as the way of life of a group of people. It includes their values, such being burial rites, marriage ceremonies and festivals. The dimension of the concept is in relation to the associated cultural relationships and value systems of an ethnic identity. What the people of the South-east (Igbos) of Nigeria value most is to ensure their loved ones are buried at home and in the most dignified manner. On marriage, it is a taboo to conduct a marriage ceremony outside one's hometown. While the traditional masquerades, attracts all sons and daughters of the region at due time to the communities. However, the rising cost of transportation may alter all that.

Akuoko (2009) identified socio-cultural practices as the distinctive, sacred matters, customs and emotional features that are shared by a society or a social group. Here it denotes the influence from fuel subsidy removal upon the people's value system which may result in cultural diversity. Socio-cultural process relates to aspects of a group where the attendant attitude is promoted within members to contribute to social and cultural development (Escobar & Quintero, 2022).

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach. These are quantitative and qualitative methods for a nuanced measurable socio-cultural impact. The population of Okigwe is 132,701 (2006, NPC Census), while the study population comprised of 15 – 65 and above age brackets who are composed of household heads, business owners, community leaders and relevant stakeholders within Okigwe communities. From the population, the sample size for this study was 400, while 394 questionnaires were returned.

A stratified random sampling technique is used to ensure diverse representation across different socio-economic groups and background. The respondents served as the primary source of data, which was gathered primarily through the use of questionnaires, tagged: Questionnaire on the Socio-cultural Effects of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Cultural Practices (SCEFSRCP). The study used closed-ended questions and a three point Likert scale to measure the socio-cultural indicators. A total of 31 question items were generated for the study in the following sections: a. respondent's demographics; b. economic impact on community life; c. impact on tourism; d. impact on marriage practices; e. impact on burial rites and, f. perceptions and coping mechanisms. The questionnaire was distributed person to person. Data was analysed with percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC).

Results

Research Question 1: How has the subsidy removal affected the economy of household of residents of Okigwe?

Table 1: Summary of frequency and percentages analysis of the economy of household of residents of Okigwe.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes Positively	278	70.6
Yes Negatively	57	14.5
None	59	15.0
Total	394	100.0

The data on Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents on how subsidy removal affected their household income. From the table, 70.6% indicated yes positively, 14.5% indicated Yes Negatively and 15.0% mentioned none. The finding shows that the

majority of the respondents (70.6%) indicated yes positively to subsidy removal affecting their household income.

Research Question 2: How has subsidy removal affected transport costs and attendance to tourists in the community

Table 2: Summary of frequency and percentages analysis of attendance of tourists in the community.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes Positively	157	39.8
Yes Negatively	152	38.6
None	85	21.6
Total	394	100.0

The data on Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents on whether spending on tourism has changed. From the table, 39.8% indicated yes positively, 38.6% indicated Yes Negatively and 21.6% indicated none. The finding shows that the majority of the

respondents (39.8%) indicated yes positively to subsidy removal affecting the number of tourists visiting their community.

Research Question 3: What are the effects of subsidy removal on marriage practices and family relationships in Okigwe?

Table 3: Summary of frequency and percentages analysis on marriage practices and family relationships in Okigwe.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes Positively	39	62.2
Yes Negatively	245	9.9
None	110	27.9
Total	394	100.0

The data on Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents on whether marriage practices impacted on relationships. From the table, 62.2% indicated yes positively, 9.9% indicated Yes Negatively and 27.9% indicated none. The finding shows that the

majority of the respondents (62.2 %) indicated Yes Positively that marriage practices have impacted on relationships.

Research Question 4: How has the financial stress from fuel increase affected attendance and community support to burial rites amongst residents of Okigwe?

Table 4: Summary of frequency and percentages analysis on attendance and community support to burial rites amongst residents of Okigwe

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes Positively	297	75.4
Yes Negatively	60	15.2
None	37	9.4
Total	394	100.0

The data on Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents on whether there has been a change in family contribution/support to the bereaved families due to subsidy removal. From the table, 75.4% indicated yes positively, 15.2% indicated Yes Negatively and 9.4% indicated none. The finding shows that the majority of the respondents (75.4%) indicated Yes Positively to change in

family contribution/support to the bereaved families due to subsidy removal.

Research Question 5: What coping strategies are Okigwe households adopting to sustain cultural values and community unity?

Table 5: Summary of frequency and percentages analysis on coping strategies adopted to sustain cultural values and community unity.

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes Positively	201	51.0
Yes Negatively	136	34.5
None	57	14.5
Total	394	100.0

The data on Table 5 shows the distribution of respondents on their rating of coping strategies families adopted to manage the increased cost. From the table, 51.0% indicated yes positively, 34.5% indicated Yes Negatively and 14.5% indicated none. The

finding shows that majority of the respondents (51.0%) indicated Yes positively to the pooling of resources to manage the changes.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between fuel subsidy removal and its effects on Okigwe residents.

Table 4.6: Impact of fuel subsidy removal on household income.

Yes Positively	Yes Negatively	None	Total
81(60.4%)	35(26.1%)	18(13.4%)	134(100.0%)
197(75.8%)	22(8.5%)	41(15.8%)	260(100.0%)
Total 278(70.6%)	57(14.5%)	59(15.0%)	394(100.0%)

$$\chi^2=22.322^a, df=2, N=394, p<.000$$

Table 4.6 is a cross-tabulation of fuel subsidy removal and the Impact of fuel subsidy removal on household income. Fuel subsidy removal was tested with an index built from Table 2 while the Impact of fuel subsidy removal on household income with question 3 has a category of Yes Positively, Yes Negatively, and None.

Rejection region: If $p \leq .05$ reject the null hypothesis (H_0), but if $p > .05$, we accept the null hypothesis. The test is one-tailed.

With the computed $\chi^2=22.322^a$; $df=2$, the test shows that there was a statistically significant relationship ($p \leq .000$) between Fuel subsidy removal and the Impact of fuel subsidy removal on household income. In other words, impact of fuel subsidy removal on household income is indeed influenced by fuel subsidy removal.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between transport costs and attendance to tourism

Table 4.7: Impact of fuel subsidy removal on number of tourists visiting your community

	Yes Positively	Yes Negatively	None	Total
	108 (48.4%)	80 (26.1%)	35 (15.7%)	223 (100.0%)
	49 (28.7%)	72 (42.1%)	50 (29.2%)	171 (100.0%)
Total	157 (39.8%)	152 (38.6%)	85 (21.6%)	394(100.0%)

$$\chi^2=18.703^a, df=2, N=394, p<.000$$

Table 4.7 is a cross tabulation of gender and impact of number of tourists visiting your community. Gender was tested with an index built from table 1 while impact of fuel subsidy removal on number of tourists visiting your community that has a category of Yes Positively, Yes Negatively and None.

Rejection region: If $p \leq .05$ reject the null hypothesis (H_0), but if $p > .05$, we accept the null hypothesis. The test is a one-tailed test.

With the computed $\chi^2=18.703^a$; $df=2$, the test shows that there was a statistically significant relationship ($p \leq .000$) between gender and impact of number of tourists visiting your community. In other words, the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the number of tourists visiting communities is indeed influenced by gender.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between fuel subsidy removal and marriage practices

Table 4.8: Impact of fuel subsidy removal on the rate of marriage practices

	Yes Positively	Yes Negatively	None	Total
	157 (70.4%)	43 (19.3%)	23 (10.3%)	223 (100.0%)
	121 (70.8%)	14 (8.2%)	36 (21.1%)	171 (100.0%)
Total	278 (70.6%)	57 (14.5%)	59 (15.0%)	394(100.0%)

$$\chi^2=15.691^a, df=2, N=394, p<.000$$

Table 4.8 is a cross tabulation of gender and the impact of marriage practices. Gender was tested with an index built from table 1 while impact on household income with question 3 that has a category of Yes Positively, Yes Negatively and None.

Rejection region: If $p \leq .05$ reject the null hypothesis (H_0), but if $p > .05$, we accept the null hypothesis. The test is a one-tailed test.

With the computed $\chi^2=15.691^a$; $df=2$, the test shows that there was a statistically significant relationship ($p \leq .000$) between gender and impact on marriage practices. In other words, fuel subsidy impact on rate of marriage practices is indeed influenced by gender.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship between financial stress of fuel increase and attendance to community burial support

Table 4.9: Impact of fuel subsidy removal on traditional burial practices

	Yes Positively	Yes Negatively	None	Total
	112 (53.1%)	40 (19.0%)	59 (28.0%)	211 (100.0%)
	95 (70.8%)	38 (8.2%)	50 (21.1%)	183 (100.0%)
Total	207 (52.5%)	78 (19.8%)	109 (27.7%)	394(100.0%)

$$\chi^2=.202^a, df=2, N=394, p<.904$$

Table 4.9 is a cross tabulation of age and impact of fuel subsidy removal on traditional burial practices. Age was tested

with an index built from table 1. The categories of 18-35 years and was grouped into "younger" while the categories for 36-60 years

and above was grouped into “Older” Impact of fuel subsidy removal on traditional burial practices with table 15 has categories of Yes Positively, Yes Negatively and None.

Rejection region: If $p \leq .05$ reject the null hypothesis (H_0), but if $p > .05$, we accept the null hypothesis. The test is one-tailed.

With the computed $\chi^2 = .202^a$; $df=2$, the test shows that there was no statistically significant relationship ($p < .904$) between age and the impact of fuel subsidy removal on traditional burial practices. In other words, the impact of fuel subsidy removal on traditional burial practices is not influenced by age.

DISCUSSION

The positive and negative effects of fuel subsidy removal on the Nigerian societies are influencing a number of economic, social and cultural dimensional fronts of the people. The reason is that everything about Nigerian's livelihood depends on fuel from transportation to power supply to both medium and large-scale entrepreneurs. The effect is therefore high and causing cultural drift in community and cultural practices.

This study explored the socio-cultural effects of fuel subsidy removal on the community life of the Okigwe people. The results vary from person to person depending on the level of income and involvement in community activities. The impact of fuel subsidy removal on household income is affirmed by over 70.6% of respondents. This is consistent with the works of Ogbeidi (2013); Couharde and Mouhoud (2021). On how cost of transportation affect ability to attend family events, 75.4% confirmed adverse effect, and relate to the study of Ozili and Obiora (2023). There have been a sharp decline on the participation of cultural festivals and the visitation of tourists outside of the community with 39.8% respondents. This result is in tandem with the research of Eke (2017); Oyinlola (2016); Gohari et al. (2018); Bazilian and Onyeji (2012) and Owen and Achieful (2015). Marriage and Burial activities were not left out in the declining participation within the communities, with research support from Rentschler (2016); Shek (2020); McGregor and Goldsmith (1998) and Ola (2020). Given the impact of the effects of increase cost of fuel, 51% of the community members have adopted the pooling together of resources in order to continue to sustain community cultural values and unity.

The impact on community values and community gatherings which is a major opportunity and platforms for socializing and transferring norms and values are affected. However, the result shows that the family and community have been able to move ahead despite the adverse effects of fuel subsidy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings, it is recommended thus:

- Government to adopt a more functional cushioning measures to enable citizens' benefit from the fuel scheme especially the vulnerable populations.
- Government to harmonize the income levels of the various sectors of the national economy and improve on the minimum wage.
- Government to facilitate alternative sources of energy to reduce the fuel cost that community life fully depends on.

- Policy makers to draw up new antics to promote culture and tourism in order to sustain traditional festivals and community activities.
- Government to promote mass transit schemes and transport subsidies to alleviate transport burden. The implementation of price control mechanisms on some basic goods is necessary to reduce further inflation and assist communities attend to cultural demands.
- Since culture changes, there should be a revise of cultural demands on burial and marriage rites to promote community participation.

CONCLUSION

From the outcome of the study, it is clear that subsidy removal has seriously affected the socio-cultural life of the communities, impacting on businesses, households, and social structures. The increase has led to increase in transportation and living costs, resulting in serious financial strain on citizens and affecting their abilities to afford basic services such as transport, cultural support etc. It has disrupted traditional ties and interactions as well as cultural participation. Cost of transport have limited mobility, reducing attendance to social and cultural activities such as marriages and burials, which are basic to the maintenance of family and community bonds; preserving local traditions. Equally, the financial stress has created social tensions, weakened family cohesion and community structures. Despite the challenges, many residents have adopted coping strategies as reducing ceremonial expenses and pooling resources together to mitigate the impact. Beside the economy, this study has shown that the socio-cultural life of the people is highly and equally affected. This trend if not reversed, may led to the extinction of some cultural rites in most communities.

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