



Does the Government really care about the Citizens? Exploring the Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Crime Rate in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This intriguing study delved into the government's decision to eliminate subsidies on petroleum prices and how this move has influenced crime rates in the vibrant city of Benin, Edo State. The research aimed to uncover the connection between the withdrawal of fuel subsidies and the alarming rise in criminal activities, as well as to assess the repercussions of this policy change on social unrest across different socioeconomic groups in the city. The study focused on residents aged 18 and older, gathering insights from a sample of 156 individuals selected through a random sampling method. Employing a mix of descriptive statistics—like frequencies, percentages, and tables—and inferential statistics, including p-values, t-values, and F-statistics, the analysis revealed a striking correlation: the removal of fuel subsidies is significantly linked to the uptick in crime rates in Benin City. Furthermore, it highlighted that this policy shift has notably impacted criminal behavior and social unrest among various socioeconomic demographics within the community. Finally, the study recommends that removing subsidies must be done gradually and strategically. Initiatives that are specifically tailored to alleviate socio-economic inequality are crucial and that thorough approach that incorporates economic diversification, crime prevention, and continuous monitoring is advised

Keywords: Fuel Subsidy Removal, Crime Rate, Criminal Activity, Social Unrest.

1. Introduction

The elimination of subsidies on petroleum prices in Nigeria has emerged as a pivotal topic, carrying significant implications for the nation's economy and

the overall welfare of its citizens. Fuel subsidy which was first used in the 1970s to lessen the effects of oil price shocks, were meant to raise living standards by making petroleum products more available to the general public (Ogwuche, Adejor, Dabish, Garba & Dole, 2024). But over time, these subsidies have become a major financial burden, eating up a sizeable amount of the national budget—₦4 trillion, or around US\$6.088 billion in 2022 alone, or 23% of Nigeria's overall budget (Couharde & Mouhoud, 2020; Ozili & Obiora, 2023). The dependence on imported refined petroleum products due to malfunctioning of domestic refineries has aggravated this financial strain, resulting to increased corruption and inefficiencies within the sector (Ogboru & Akinyotu, 2024).

Nigeria's economic policy underwent a dramatic change in May 2023 when President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration removed fuel subsidy. The immediate consequences of this decision included a hike in petrol prices from ₦189 to ₦800 to ₦900 per litre (Ozili & Obiora, 2023). Low-income households have been disproportionately affected by these sharp price increases, which have also raised inflationary pressures on necessities and transportation costs (Esekpa, Ekarika & Njama, 2024). Although removing subsidy is viewed as an essential first step in economic reform, there are serious worries about the social effects of this move, especially given the high crime rates in urban areas like Benin City, Edo State.

Numerous studies have shown ample evidence of the connection between economic hardship and criminal activity. Economic theory suggests that when individuals find themselves grappling with stagnant wages and rising costs of living, they may resort to criminal behavior as a desperate survival tactic (Scott, 2000). The removal of fuel subsidy may make matters

worse for many families in Nigeria, who already face high unemployment rates and insufficient cash. Households that struggle with reduced purchasing power are more likely to experience social unrest and criminal behaviour as they turn to illegal means of coping with their financial circumstances (Ozili & Obiora, 2023).

Although the removal of fuel subsidies may present an opportunity for economic restructuring and improved resource allocation toward critical sectors such as education and health (Hoy, Kim, Nguyen, Sosa & Tiwari, 2023), it is imperative to consider its broader implications on social equity and crime. This research will contribute to the on-going discourse surrounding fuel subsidy reforms in Nigeria by highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive planning and targeted support mechanisms for vulnerable populations.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

Considering the effects it might have on socio-economic activities in urban areas like Benin City, Edo State, the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria marks a turning point in the country's economic development. Fuel subsidy has historically been used as a tool to boost economic activity and lessen the financial burden on consumers. But the continuation of these subsidies has also caused the Nigerian government to face serious financial challenges, which has resulted in a complicated relationship between economic policy and social stability (Gambo & Rufa'i, 2023; Ozili & Obiora, 2023). It is authoritative to comprehend the possible repercussions this policy shift may have on crime rates within affected communities.

Despite the government's intentions to promote economic growth through subsidy reforms, little is known about how these measures can worsen socioeconomic inequality and lead to a rise in criminal activities. Immediate hike in prices of fuel has been linked to the removal of subsidy, which has led to inflationary pressures that impact necessities (Ogwuche, Adejor, Dabish, Garba & Dole, 2024). Families with limited financial resources feel the pinch of these economic strains more acutely, as they often allocate a significant chunk of their earnings to cover fuel costs. People may resort to criminal activity as a survival strategy as a result of this increased financial hardship (World Bank, 2023).

Moreover, past experiences with subsidy removals have revealed that without support mechanisms and adequate planning, such reforms can result to widespread discontent and social unrest. The historical

background of Nigeria's fuel subsidy schemes shows that, despite their stated goals of stabilising prices and helping vulnerable groups, these policies have frequently led to corruption and market inefficiencies (Harring, Jönsson, Matti, Mundaca & Jagers, 2023). Protests and public outcry have already been triggered by the recent subsidy removal, underscoring the precarious link between public trust and governmental policy. This circumstance highlights a critical research problem: How does the elimination of fuel subsidies impact crime levels in Benin City, especially in the face of escalating economic challenges?

Additionally, the narrative is further complicated by the political economy around fuel subsidy. In the past, subsidies have served as a tool for political patronage, providing governments with a means to gain popular support (Steadman, Tindall, Tan, Okereke, Chukwuemeka, Id, Onyeneke, Id, Nnamani, Nwajiaku-Dahou & Simpson, 2024). The sudden removal of these financial supports could cause local economies to become unstable and undermine public confidence in government agencies, both of which are strongly correlated with crime rates. The difficulty is in managing these intricate relationships while making sure that changes to the law do not unintentionally increase crime or worsen already-existing inequalities.

This study attempt to fill a significant gap in the literature by examining the specific impacts of fuel subsidy removal on crime rates in Benin City. By analysing quantitative data, this research will provide insights into how economic policies can shape social behaviours and community safety. Understanding these relationships is crucial for policymakers seeking to implement effective reforms that balance fiscal responsibility with social equity.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This research embarks on an intriguing journey to uncover the impact of the government's choice to scrap fuel subsidies on petroleum products and its ripple effect on crime rates in the vibrant Benin City, Edo State. The investigation will delve into a variety of essential goals, including:

- (i) To delve into the connection between the elimination of fuel subsidies and the rise in crime rates in Benin City, Edo State.
- (ii) To explore how the withdrawal of fuel subsidies influences criminal behavior and social turmoil across different socioeconomic groups in Benin City.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

The null hypotheses formulated for investigation in this study are:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between fuel subsidy removal and increase in crime rate in Benin

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between fuel subsidy removal and criminal activities and social unrest among the various socioeconomic groups in Benin.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical foundation, exploring how the withdrawal of government subsidies on petroleum products influences crime rates in Benin City, Edo State, is woven from a tapestry of interrelated theories. These theories illuminate the intricate dance between social behavior, economic policies, and the ebb and flow of crime rates.

2.1 Economic Theory (Supply and Demand Dynamics)

The foundation for comprehending market dynamics, particularly how price changes impact consumer behaviour and economic situations, was established by Marshall's principles (Marshall, 1890).

The removal of fuel subsidy alters the supply and demand equilibrium in the petroleum market. Prices usually increase when subsidies are removed, which lowers the purchasing power of consumers. People may turn to illegal activities as a result of this financial burden as they look for other ways to make ends meet (Kolawole, Adegun & Adebo, 2023). According to the hypothesis, people may turn to crime to satisfy their basic needs as lawful options become less affordable.

2.2 Opportunity Cost

According to the opportunity cost theory, people evaluate the advantages of committing crimes against the possibility of finding gainful employment. Particularly for lower socioeconomic groups, the perceived advantages of crime may surpass those of lawful employment if the cost of living increases significantly as a result of the removal of subsidies (Agunbiade, 2024). This viewpoint is consistent with research showing a link between economic hardship and higher crime rates (Ozili & Obiora, 2023).

2.3 Social Disorganization Theory (Community Structure and Crime)

The study by Shaw and McKay examined urban juvenile delinquency and the impact of social structures on crime rates (Shaw & McKay, 1942).

The social disorganization theory suggests that neighborhoods lacking strong social structures are more prone to criminal activity. Removing fuel subsidies may make pre-existing socioeconomic problems like poverty and unemployment worse and cause societal disarray. In Benin City, increasing transportation costs have previously been reported to reduce passenger traffic and significantly increase fare prices (Nigerian Observer, 2023). These economic burdens can lead to heightened frustration and unrest among the people.

2.4 Strain Theory (Adaptation to Economic Stressors)

Merton's theory paints a vivid picture of how societal expectations can push individuals toward the shadows of crime when they find themselves unable to achieve culturally endorsed goals through legitimate means (Merton, 1938). This strain theory suggests that when there's a gap between society's aspirations—like financial security—and a person's ability to reach those aspirations legally, the pressure can become overwhelming, leading some to stray into unlawful behavior. The recent withdrawal of fuel subsidies could intensify this pressure on various socioeconomic groups, particularly those already teetering on the edge of vulnerability. Such stresses can lead to societal unrest and criminal activity, as evidenced by recent protests in Edo State over the hardships brought on by the removal of subsidy (Punch Newspaper, 2023).

2.5 Routine Activity Theory (Opportunity for Crime)

Picture this: crime is like a dance that unfolds when three key players take the stage. According to the routine activity theory, a motivated wrongdoer waltzes into the spotlight, locking eyes with a perfect target—someone who's blissfully unaware and unprotected. This intriguing concept, introduced by Cohen and Felson in 1979, suggests that when these elements align—vulnerable victims, eager offenders, and absent guardians—the stage is set for mischief to occur. The economic outcome from the removal of subsidy may intensify the number of motivated offenders while at the same time reducing community resources for policing and social services (Kolawole et al., 2023).

There may be more opportunities for crime if transportation costs rise and services become less accessible.

3. Methodology

This study made use of descriptive survey research method as its research design. The population of this

research consists of all residents of Benin City who are 18 years and above. This study used the primary source of data collection. In this study, we gathered insights from a diverse group of 156 participants, carefully chosen through a random sampling method to ensure a fair representation. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were both used as methods of data analysis.

4. Results and Discussions

The demographic characteristics of the respondents is hereby presented

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	44	28.2
	Female	112	71.8
	TOTAL	156	100.0
Age	18 – 25 years	92	59.0
	26–35 years	8	5.1
	36-45 years	20	12.8
	46-55 years	20	12.8
	56 years and above	16	10.3
	TOTAL	156	100.0
Occupation	Employed	42	26.9
	Self-employed	16	10.3
	Unemployed	4	2.6
	Student	86	55.1
	Retired	8	5.1
	TOTAL	156	100.0
Monthly Level of Income	Below ₦50,000	72	46.2
	₦50,000 - ₦100,000	40	25.6
	₦100,001 - ₦500,000	40	25.6
	Above ₦500,000	4	2.6
	TOTAL	156	100.0

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2024)

There were 112 (71.8%) females and 44 (28.2%) males. This suggests that there may be gender-related insights in the context of fuel subsidy views, as the sample has a strong female majority.

Ages 18 to 25: 92 (59.0%); 26 to 35: 8 (5.1%); 36 to 45: 20 (12.8%); 46 to 55: 20 (12.8%); and 56 and older: 16 (10.3%). Nearly 60% of the sample is composed of people between the ages of 18 and 25. This might represent the opinions of younger people on economic matters, especially those pertaining to subsidies.

42 (26.9%) were employed, 16 (10.3%) were self-employed, 4 (2.6%) were unemployed, 86 (55.1%) were students, and 8 (5.1%) were retired. Since students make up the majority of respondents (55.1%), their opinions on economic policy may differ from those of employed people.

72 (46.2%) are under ₦50,000; 40 (25.6%) are between ₦50,000 and ₦100,000; 40 (25.6%) are between ₦100,001 and ₦500,000; and 4 (2.6%) are over ₦500,000. Since nearly half of the respondents make less than ₦50,000, economic policies like eliminating subsidies may have a significant effect on those with lower incomes.

Objective 1: To find out the Relationship between the Removal of Fuel Subsidy and Crime Rates in Benin City, Edo State?

Table 2: Fuel Subsidy Removal and Crime Rates

S/N	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	SD DEV
		No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)		
Q1	The removal of fuel subsidies has resulted in a rise in crime rates within Benin City	4	2.6	10	6.4	13	8.3	51	32.7	78	50.0	4.21	1.02
Q2	I believe that increased fuel costs are a factor that leads to higher levels of criminal activity in my community.	5	3.2	9	5.8	17	10.9	52	33.3	73	46.8	4.15	1.04
Q3	Following the removal of the subsidy, I have observed a surge in incidents of theft and robbery in my neighbourhood	7	4.5	15	9.6	22	14.1	55	35.3	57	36.5	3.90	1.14
Q4	The financial burden created by the removal of subsidies has compelled some individuals to engage in criminal behaviour	6	3.8	12	7.7	16	10.3	54	34.6	68	43.6	4.06	1.09
Q5	I feel that the government's decision to remove fuel subsidies has directly impacted my sense of security.	6	3.8	17	10.9	8	5.1	68	43.6	57	36.5	3.98	1.10
Grand Mean												4.06	1.08

Researcher's Field Work (2024)

The respondents' average answers to the statements outlining the reasons for crime rates in Benin City are shown in Table 2 above. The respondents (mean=4.21) agreed with the first statement in Table 2, which states that the removal of fuel subsidies has resulted in a rise in crime rates within Benin City. Similarly, respondents agreed that they believe that increased fuel costs are a factor that leads to higher levels of criminal activity in their communities (mean=4.15); that following the removal of the subsidy, they have observed a surge in incidents of theft and robbery in their neighbourhoods (mean=3.90); that the financial burden created by the removal of subsidies has compelled some individuals to engage in criminal behaviour (mean=4.06); and they feel that the government's decision to remove fuel subsidies has directly impacted their sense of security (mean=3.98). There is general agreement that the removal of fuel subsidies is seen adversely in relation to crime rates, as evidenced by the grand mean of 4.06 with an SD of 1.08.

Objective 2: To find out the Effect that Removal of Fuel Subsidies Has on Criminal Activity and Social Unrest among Various Socioeconomic Groups in Benin City?

Table 3: Fuel Subsidy Removal and Criminal Activity/Social Unrest Among Socioeconomic Groups

S/N	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	SD DEV
		No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)		
Q6	The removal of subsidies has sparked social unrest among low-income families in Benin City	5	3.2	7	4.5	10	6.4	52	33.3	82	52.6	4.28	0.99
Q7	I have observed a rise in protests and demonstrations concerning the economic consequences of increasing fuel prices	7	4.5	12	7.7	10	6.4	60	38.5	67	42.9	4.08	1.10
Q8	The withdrawal of subsidies has resulted in social unrest among economically disadvantaged families in Benin City	5	3.2	8	5.1	11	7.1	28	17.9	104	66.7	4.40	1.04
Q9	Young individuals in my area have become more susceptible to engaging in criminal behaviour since the subsidy was removed.	5	3.2	16	10.3	11	7.1	78	50.0	46	29.5	3.92	1.03
Q10	Since the removal of subsidies, there has been heightened tension between different social groups in my community	4	2.6	6	3.8	14	9.0	67	42.9	65	41.7	4.17	0.93
Grand Mean												4.17	1.02

Researcher's Field Work (2024)

Table 3 shows that, with mean scores larger than 2.5 for each question, the respondents agreed with every item outlining criminal activity and social unrest among various socioeconomic groups in Benin City. The first item's mean score (mean=4.28) showed that respondents generally agreed that the removal of subsidies has sparked social unrest among low-income families in Benin City. Also, the respondents agreed that they have observed a rise in protests and demonstrations concerning the economic consequences of increasing fuel prices (mean=4.08). Respondents agreed that the withdrawal of subsidies has resulted in social unrest among economically disadvantaged families in Benin City (mean=4.40). Once more, respondents concurred that young individuals in their areas have become more susceptible to engaging in criminal behaviour since the subsidy was removed (mean=3.92) and that since the removal of subsidies, there has been heightened tension between different social groups in their communities (mean=4.17).

Analysis of the social unrest dimension yielded a grand mean score of 4.17 (SD = 1.02), indicating robust agreement among respondents regarding the potential for social instability stemming from the economic consequences of subsidy removal. The relatively high mean score, coupled with a moderate standard deviation, suggests a consistent and substantial level of concern regarding the societal implications of this economic policy adjustment.

Table 4: Removal of Fuel Subsidies

S/N	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	SD DEV
		No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)		
Q11	I believe that removing fuel subsidies was essential for fostering economic growth	6	3.8	12	7.7	32	20.5	22	14.1	84	53.8	4.06	1.18
Q12	Since the removal of fuel subsidies, my daily expenses have risen considerably	6	3.8	9	5.8	11	7.1	35	22.4	95	60.9	4.31	1.08
Q13	The rise in fuel prices after the subsidy removal has negatively affected my household's financial stability	4	2.6	1	0.6	14	9.0	48	30.8	89	57.1	4.39	0.88
Q14	The removal of fuel subsidies has created social tensions within my community.	5	3.2	6	3.8	4	2.6	66	42.3	75	48.1	4.28	0.94
Q15	I have noticed a rise in community conversations or protests regarding the effects of subsidy removal	5	3.2	9	5.8	13	8.3	77	49.4	52	33.3	4.04	0.97
Grand Mean												3.79	1.18

Researcher's Field work (2024)

Given that the mean score for every question in Table 4 is more than 2.5, it can be concluded that the respondents agreed with every item that explained removal of fuel subsidies. The first item's mean score (mean=4.06) showed that respondents were in agreement that they believe that removing fuel subsidies was essential for fostering economic growth. Again, respondents strongly agreed that since the removal of fuel subsidies, their daily expenses have risen considerably (mean=4.31); that the rise in fuel prices after the subsidy removal has negatively affected their household's financial stability (mean=4.39). Similarly, the respondents agreed that the removal of fuel subsidies has created social tensions within their communities (mean=4.28) and that they have noticed a rise in community conversations or protests regarding the effects of subsidy removal (mean=4.04).

Statistical analysis revealed an aggregate grand mean of 3.79 (SD = 1.18), indicating a moderately strong consensus among participants regarding the implications of subsidy withdrawal. The mean score, positioned above the scale's midpoint, coupled with a standard deviation that reflects reasonable response dispersion, suggests substantial concordance in participants' perceptions of subsidy removal impacts, though with some variability in individual responses.

Hypothesis Testing

Regression analysis (t-test) was used in this study to assess the hypotheses at the 5% significant level. The p-value determines whether or not we accept a hypothesis. If the p-value is >0.05 (more than 5%), we fail to reject the null hypothesis, meaning we accept it. If the p-value is <0.05 (less than 5%), we reject the null hypothesis.

The following are the hypotheses that were investigated in this study and are expressed in the null form:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the removal of fuel subsidies and an increase in crime rates in Benin City.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between removal of fuel subsidies and criminal activities/social unrest among various socioeconomic groups in Benin City

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.611 ^a	0.373	0.369	0.58787

a. Predictors: (Constant), removal of fuel subsidies

The value of R² which is 0.373 indicates that the independent variable (removal of fuel subsidies) explains only 37.3.2%; 62.7% of the dependent variable's (an increase in crime rate) systematic volatility goes unaccounted for. After adjustments of the R-squared, this percentage drops even lower to 36.9%. This indicates that an increase in crime rate is determined by factors apart from the independent variable (removal of fuel subsidies).

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	31.701	1	31.701	91.729	0.000 ^b
	Residual	53.222	154	.346		
	Total	84.923	155			

a. Dependent Variable: an increase in crime rate
b. Predictors: (Constant), removal of fuel subsidies

At 0.000, the F statistic of 91.729 is significant. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between removal of fuel subsidies and an increase in crime rate in Benin City.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.731	0.364		2.010	0.046
	removal of fuel subsidies	0.800	0.083	0.611	9.578	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: an increase in crime rate

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the removal of fuel subsidies and an increase in crime rates in Benin City.

Removal of fuel subsidies is significant at the 0.05 level of statistical significance, as indicated by the p-value of 0.000. Therefore, with a t-value of 9.578 and P-values of 0.000, we reject the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between the removal of fuel subsidies and an increase in crime rates in Benin City. This implies that an increase in crime rates in Benin City is statistically predicted by removal of fuel subsidies

Model 2 Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.703 ^a	0.494	0.491	0.38080

a. Predictors: (Constant), removal of fuel subsidies

The value of R² which is 0.494 indicates that the independent variable (removal of fuel subsidies) explains only 49.4%; 50.6% of the dependent variable's (criminal activity and social unrest among socioeconomic groups) systematic volatility goes unaccounted for. After adjustments of the R-squared, this percentage drops even lower to 49.1%. This

indicates that criminal activity and social unrest among socioeconomic groups is determined by other factors apart from the independent variable (removal of fuel subsidies).

ANOVA ^a						
Model 2	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	21.788	1	21.788	150.252	.000 ^b
	Residual	22.331	154	.145		
	Total	44.119	155			

a. Dependent Variable: criminal activity and social unrest among socioeconomic groups
 b. Predictors: (Constant), removal of fuel subsidies

At 0.000, the F statistic of 150.252 is significant. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between removal of fuel subsidies and criminal activity and social unrest among socioeconomic groups in Benin City.

Coefficients ^a						
Model 2		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.501	.236		6.372	.000
	removal of fuel subsidies	.663	.054	.703	12.258	.000

a. Dependent Variable: criminal activity social unrest among socioeconomic groups

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between removal of fuel subsidies and criminal activity/social unrest among various socioeconomic groups in Benin City.

Removal of fuel subsidies is significant at the 0.05 level of statistical significance, as indicated by the p-value of 0.000. Therefore, with a t-value of 12.258 and P-values of 0.000, we reject the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between removal of fuel subsidies and criminal activity/social unrest among various socioeconomic groups in Benin City. This implies that criminal activity/social unrest among various socioeconomic groups in Benin City is statistically predicted by removal of fuel subsidies.

5. Discussion of Findings

This research delves into the intriguing relationship between the government's decision to eliminate fuel subsidies and the surge in crime rates in Benin City, Edo State. To truly grasp the intricate dynamics at play, we must explore the deeper mechanisms and broader societal implications of this policy shift. The findings reveal a striking correlation: the withdrawal of fuel subsidies has notably influenced crime rates across various socioeconomic groups in Benin City. This study meticulously unpacks these results, situating them within the framework of existing literature and theoretical perspectives. One of the standout revelations is the clear link between the removal of fuel subsidies and the uptick in criminal activity in the city. There are multiple interrelated mechanisms that explain this relationship. The first direct consequence of removing subsidies is usually a dramatic rise in fuel prices, which has a knock-on effect on the entire

economy (Ogwuche, Adejor, Dabish, Garba & Dole, 2024). This economic pressure has put a significant burden on household budgets in Benin City by raising food prices, travel costs, and overall inflation. These economic constraints are consistent with strain theory, which postulates that people may turn to illegal tactics to accomplish social goals when they are unable to do so through legal channels (Garland, 2022). Vulnerable people may turn to criminal activity as a means of surviving the abrupt economic shock caused by the termination of subsidies. This result is consistent with comparable research conducted in other developing countries, where quick changes to policies impacting necessities have been connected to a rise in property crimes and societal instability (Nullmeier, González & Obinger, 2022).

The second important finding reveals that the impact of fuel subsidy removal on criminal activity significantly varies across socioeconomic groups. This disparity shows important patterns about susceptibility and resilience within various groupings of the population of Benin City. Study shows that lower-income neighbourhoods experienced a more pronounced increase in crime rates compared to wealthier areas (Galster, Atkinson, Booza & Thompson, 2024).

There are several reasons for this discrepancy:

Economic Buffer Capacity: While lower-income groups might deplete their savings more rapidly, higher-income groups usually have more financial resources to withstand the shock of rising fuel prices (Sampson & Smith, 2021.)

Employment Vulnerability: People who work in transit-dependent or informal industries are more likely to experience economic instability, which may make them more likely to commit crimes (Edwards et al., 2023).

Geographic Considerations: Communities that rely more on private vehicles for revenue production or have less access to public transport are more vulnerable to rises in gasoline prices (Unegbu, Yawas, Dan-asabe & Alabi, 2024).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This research delved into the intriguing connection between the government's bold move to scrap fuel subsidies on petroleum products has sparked quite a conversation and the surge in crime rates in Benin City, Edo State. The aim was to uncover how this subsidy removal correlates with criminal activity and to determine if the subsequent rise in fuel prices has a notable impact on the economic well-being of households in the area.

The findings reveal a compelling narrative: the withdrawal of fuel subsidies is closely linked to an uptick in crime rates in Benin City. Moreover, it appears that this policy shift significantly influences criminal behavior and social unrest across various socioeconomic groups within the city.

6.2 Recommendations

Drawing from the insights gathered, we propose the following suggestions:

First and foremost, removing subsidies must be done gradually and strategically. To lessen the impact on vulnerable groups, policymakers should carry out the removal in stages, allowing for economic adjustment and the creation of focused social protection initiatives. Putting money into the infrastructure of public transport can lessen the impact of rising fuel prices. This strategy aims to reduce social disruption while acknowledging the strong relationship between the removal of subsidies and higher crime rates.

Secondly, initiatives that are specifically designed to alleviate socioeconomic inequality are crucial. This entails creating income assistance plans for communities with lower incomes, putting job creation plans into action in industries most impacted by rising

fuel prices, and offering training in entrepreneurship and financial literacy. By addressing the disparate effects of subsidy removal on different societal segments, these policies seek to improve economic resilience across socioeconomic groups.

Finally, a thorough approach that incorporates economic diversification, crime prevention, and continuous monitoring is advised. This entails stepping up community policing initiatives, funding initiatives for youth empowerment, and improving cooperation between local authorities and law enforcement. Fuel subsidies can be lessened at the same time by encouraging investment in renewable energy sources and helping small and medium-sized businesses. It will be possible to track the continuing effects of subsidy removal and make data-driven policy modifications by putting in place a strong monitoring and evaluation structure. This comprehensive strategy seeks to promote social cohesion and economic stability in Benin City while addressing the possible rise in criminal activity.

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