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Consequences of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Unemployment in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the consequences of fuel subsidy removal on unemployment in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Relying on secondary data sourced from journals, textbooks, and Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) bulletins, the research investigates the broader socio-economic implications of subsidy reform, with a particular focus on employment dynamics. The findings reveal a significant correlation between the removal of fuel subsidies and rising unemployment levels in the state. Specifically, the study highlights how increased fuel prices have elevated operational costs for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which serve as a major source of employment in Nasarawa State. This economic pressure has forced many businesses to downsize or shut down, leading to substantial job losses, especially in the informal sector. The study further identifies the broader economic disruptions caused by the subsidy removal, including reduced mobility, limited access to livelihoods, and diminished consumer purchasing power. In conclusion, while subsidy removal aims to ensure fiscal sustainability, its adverse impact on employment cannot be overlooked. The study recommends the implementation of comprehensive job creation and skills development policies, targeted social protection programmes, and strategic investments in public transportation to mitigate the negative effects. These findings provide critical insights for policymakers, legislators, and development actors working to balance economic reforms with social stability and inclusive growth in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Fuel Subsidy Removal, Employment, Unemployment, Government, Revenue, Nasarawa State*

*1.0 INTR*ODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Fuel subsidy refers to a government-provided discount on the market price of fossil fuels, enabling consumers to purchase petroleum products below their actual market value (Ovaga & Okechukwu, 2022). This intervention, though initially designed to ease the burden of fuel costs on citizens and spur economic activity, has become a subject of global debate due to its fiscal implications and distortionary economic effects. In 2022 alone, the global fossil fuel subsidy bill reached approximately $1 trillion, an astronomical rise from $325 billion in 2018, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). This amount dwarfs global humanitarian aid ($204 billion) and even exceeds the aggregate government revenue of many developing countries (Couharde & Mouhoud, 2020).

In Nigeria, fuel subsidy regimes have historically consumed a significant portion of national revenues. Despite the policy's intentions to alleviate poverty and stimulate economic participation,

it has been fraught with inefficiencies, corruption, and economic distortions. In response to mounting fiscal pressure, the Nigerian government removed the long-standing subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) in May 2023. This action, while applauded by international financial institutions and some economic reformists, has precipitated sharp increases in fuel prices and widespread socioeconomic consequences, particularly in subnational regions like Nasarawa State.

Unemployment in Nigeria, especially among youth has remained persistently high. Industrial closures, weak infrastructure, unreliable power supply, and policy inconsistencies have forced many enterprises to downsize or exit the market (Ogunjimi & Amune, 2019). In Nasarawa State, the removal of the fuel subsidy has compounded these challenges. Fuel price hikes have translated into increased transportation and production costs, weakening the operational capacity of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), reducing consumer demand, and intensifying job insecurity. Informal sector workers, transport operators, traders, and farmers, who rely heavily on affordable fuel for mobility and productivity, are now grappling with diminished incomes and shrinking opportunities.

The broader effect is a tightening labor market where businesses struggle to maintain workforce levels amid soaring operational costs. The absence of cushioning social protection mechanisms or targeted intervention programs has made it difficult for vulnerable households and enterprises to adapt. Consequently, this study seeks to investigate the depth and dimensions of the unemployment crisis precipitated by the subsidy removal in Nasarawa State, while proposing evidence-based solutions to mitigate its impact.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian government's decision to remove fuel subsidies was largely driven by the need to curtail fiscal deficits and realign public spending. However, this reform has yielded profound unintended consequences, especially with respect to employment dynamics in Nasarawa State. The immediate aftermath has been a surge in petrol prices, which has escalated transportation costs and raised input costs for goods and services. These cost pressures have adversely affected business operations, particularly for SMEs that dominate Nasarawa's economic landscape (Ozili & Ozen, 2021).

The increase in overhead costs has triggered downsizing, reduced hiring capacity, and, in some cases, complete business closures. Consequently, both formal and informal workers, many of whom are already economically vulnerable and have been displaced or subjected to precarious employment conditions. This economic shock, in the absence of effective safety nets or transition support programs, has intensified household poverty and social unrest (Omitogun, 2021).

Given that unemployment is both a symptom and a driver of underdevelopment, there is an urgent need to assess the extent to which the removal of fuel subsidies has influenced the labor market in Nasarawa State. Without such an assessment, policymakers may lack the evidence base necessary to design mitigating strategies or to provide tailored support for the most affected demographics. Hence, this study seeks to fill that knowledge gap.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the consequences of fuel subsidy removal on unemployment in Nasarawa State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the impact of fuel subsidy removal on employment levels in Nasarawa State.

2. Explore how subsidy removal affects the operational costs of SMEs and their capacity to maintain or create jobs in Nasarawa State.
3. Assess the broader economic consequences of fuel subsidy removal in Nasarawa State, particularly regarding labor market resilience.

1.4 Research Questions

To address the research problem, this study is guided by the following questions:

1. What is the impact of fuel subsidy removal on employment in Nasarawa State?
2. How does subsidy removal affect the operational costs of SMEs and their ability to retain or recruit employees?
3. What are the wider economic implications of fuel subsidy removal in Nasarawa State, especially on the state's labor force?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study holds substantial significance for multiple stakeholders. For policymakers, it provides critical empirical insight into how a major economic reform fuel subsidy removal, affects employment outcomes at the subnational level. For SMEs and labor unions, the findings may inform advocacy and strategic responses to labor market disruptions. Additionally, development partners, donor agencies, and civil society organizations may draw on the study to guide the design of social safety nets or entrepreneurial support schemes. Lastly, this research contributes to the broader academic discourse on subsidy reform, labor economics, and subnational development in Nigeria.

1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study focuses on the impact of fuel subsidy removal on unemployment in Nasarawa State, using data from the first 12 months following the policy's implementation in 2023. While the phenomenon has national implications, this research is limited to Nasarawa State due to logistical, time, and budget constraints. Additionally, the study concentrates on employment-related outcomes, particularly in the formal and informal sectors, and does not extensively address other aspects such as environmental implications or public revenue generation.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the research background, problem statement, objectives, and questions. Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature, including theoretical and empirical studies on fuel subsidies and unemployment. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, detailing the study design, sampling techniques, data collection, and analysis methods. Chapter Four presents and discusses the research findings, while Chapter Five offers conclusions and policy recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

2.1.1 Fuel Subsidy Removal

Fuel subsidies are government mechanisms that lower the cost of fossil fuels to make them affordable for consumers, particularly in developing countries (Ovaga & Okechukwu, 2022).

Though aimed at alleviating poverty and stimulating economic activity, their fiscal implications have come under scrutiny. Globally, fossil fuel subsidies rose to $1 trillion in 2022, far surpassing global aid and the collective government revenue of developing countries (IEA, 2022). Critics argue that such funds could be redirected to targeted social support and infrastructure (Ozili & Ozen, 2021).

Subsidy removal can improve government revenues, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and encourage energy efficiency (Sweeney, 2020). However, the policy often disproportionately affects low-income households, escalating the cost of living and operational expenses, especially in energy-dependent sectors (McCulloch, Moerenhout, & Yang, 2021). This makes subsidy reforms politically sensitive and socially contentious (Rentschler & Kornejew, 2017).

In Nigeria, fuel subsidies have been a longstanding fiscal tool since the 1970s. Despite attempts at removal in 1986 and 2012, public backlash reversed these efforts. As of 2022, subsidy expenditures reached ₦4 trillion, accounting for nearly a quarter of the national budget (Babatunde, 2023). The 2023 removal sparked inflation, worsened poverty, and strained SMEs, which rely on stable fuel prices for survival (Adekunle & Oseni, 2021).

While advocates support subsidy removal to enhance fiscal sustainability and reallocate funds to critical sectors like health and education (Ozili & Arun, 2023), others warn it may trigger macroeconomic instability, inflation, and social unrest (Omotosho, 2020). Thus, successful reform requires transparent governance and the provision of safety nets like cash transfers and targeted interventions (Coady et al., 2019; IPCC, 2018).

2.1.2 Unemployment

Unemployment refers to the condition where individuals who are willing and able to work cannot find employment. It reflects a labor market imbalance where labor supply exceeds demand (Elgouacem, 2020). The ILO (2009) defines it as the share of the labor force that is jobless but actively seeking employment.

Unemployment may be structural, cyclical, or classical, resulting from issues like automation, economic downturns, or wage rigidity. In Nigeria, persistent unemployment especially among youths is fueled by poor infrastructure, insecurity, erratic policies, and a shrinking industrial base (Jhingan, 2016; Ogunjimi & Amune, 2019). The removal of fuel subsidies has further worsened this by raising business costs and triggering layoffs, particularly in SMEs and the informal sector (Ozili & Ozen, 2021).

2.3 THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.3.1 Social Protection Theory

This study is anchored on the Social Protection Theory, which is essential for understanding how to mitigate the adverse effects of fuel subsidy removal on vulnerable populations in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Social protection programs are designed to address vulnerability and risk, ensuring a minimum level of security and well-being for individuals and communities. These programs encompass measures such as cash transfers, employment assistance, and social insurance, which help households cope with increased living costs and reduced employment opportunities following subsidy removal.

For instance, studies have shown that social protection measures can alleviate the cost of living for vulnerable populations by providing direct financial support, thereby minimizing the negative impacts of rising fuel prices on household welfare (Costella, De Muro, & Kollar, 2023). This aligns with the broader goal of Social Protection Theory, which is to foster economic resilience and stability.

The theory is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where fuel subsidy removal has faced considerable public opposition due to its socio-economic implications. Rising fuel prices often exacerbate poverty and inequality, increasing living and transportation costs while adversely affecting small businesses and households reliant on affordable energy (Ozili, 2023). Social protection strategies mitigate these impacts by delivering targeted support to affected groups, such as low-income households and small business owners.

Integrating social protection programs into policy responses to fuel subsidy removal enables governments to address immediate needs while promoting long-term economic stability. For example, pro-poor policies redirect funds saved from subsidy removal toward developmental activities benefiting vulnerable populations (International Institute for Sustainable Development, IISD, 2023). These policies help redistribute resources to sectors most affected by subsidy removal.

Applying Social Protection Theory in this context provides a framework for developing effective strategies to address economic vulnerabilities arising from fuel subsidy removal. Policymakers can propose actionable solutions, such as compensation mechanisms and developmental investments, to reduce inequality and poverty while ensuring that reforms protect the welfare of citizens, particularly the most vulnerable (Evans, Hausladen, Kosec, & Reese, 2023).

2.4 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.4.1 Fuel Subsidy Removal and Unemployment

Several studies have analyzed the consequences of fuel subsidy removal on unemployment in Nigeria and other regions:

Odugbesan & Ojo (2018): This study examines the impact of fuel subsidy removal on unemployment in Nigeria, focusing on how increased fuel prices affected job availability in both formal and informal sectors. Findings revealed that regions dependent on transportation and industrial sectors faced significant unemployment rates due to higher operational costs.

Akinlo & Odusola (2019): The research investigates macroeconomic effects of petroleum subsidy removal in Sub-Saharan Africa, with emphasis on Nigeria. Results indicate a sharp rise in urban unemployment linked to increased transportation costs and reduced disposable income, disproportionately affecting low-income households.

Olomola & Adewuyi (2020): This study explores the socio-economic consequences of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. Findings suggest that while the government aimed to reduce fiscal deficits, the removal of subsidies led to rising unemployment in sectors like transportation and manufacturing, which heavily rely on affordable fuel.

Olayiwola & Opeyemi (2017): The research analyzes the relationship between fuel subsidy removal, inflation, and employment in Nigeria. Results show that fuel price hikes increased production costs, prompting firms to downsize their workforce to remain competitive.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the consequences of fuel subsidy removal on unemployment in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, using a survey research design.

3.1.1 Sampling and Data Collection

A total of 400 respondents were selected across four Local Government Areas in the Nasarawa State namely; Karu, Toto, Lafia, Akwanga, Doma and Nasarawa Eggon using simple random sampling. The respondents were categorized as follows:

- 100 Business Owners/Managers: To understand how operational cost changes affect employment adjustments.
- 100 Sectoral Employees: Representing key industries like transportation, agriculture, retail, and manufacturing, focusing on job losses and wage challenges.
- 100 Government Representatives: From agencies such as the Ministry of Economic Planning and Ministry of Labour, offering insights into policy responses and labor data.
- 100 Community Leaders: Including traditional rulers, religious figures, and youth representatives, to provide a grassroots perspective on socio-economic impacts.

3.1.2 Instrument and Validity

The study used a structured questionnaire adapted from Audu, Idrees, and Maman (2023), modified from 24 items to 15 relevant questions tailored to the context of fuel subsidy removal.

Response and Analysis

Out of 400 questionnaires administered, 320 were completed and returned, yielding a valid response rate of 80%. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency tables and percentages) and inferential statistics, including regression analysis performed with SPSS software.

Regression Model

The regression model used for this study is as follows:

$UNEMP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FSR + \beta_2 GEI + \beta_3 PRM + \varepsilon$

Where:

UNEMP = Unemployment rate
FSR = Fuel Subsidy Removal
GEI = Government Employment Initiatives
PRM = Price-related Market Responses
β_0 = Constant
β_1–β_3 = Regression coefficients
ε = Error term

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Independent and Dependent Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
UNEMP	320	1.00	5.00	3.891	.7214	-.5126	.136	-.483	.136
FRS	320	1.00	5.00	4.203	.6591	.774	.136	-.613	.136
GEI	320	1.00	5.00	2.438	.8197	.234	.136	-.992	.136
PRM	320	1.00	5.00	4.027	.5986	-.668	.136	-.441	.136
Valid N (listwise)	320								

Source: Field Study, 2025 via SPSS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for Unemployment (UNEMP), Fuel Subsidy Removal (FSR), Government Employment Initiatives (GEI), and Price-related Market Responses (PRM) in Nasarawa State.

The mean value of 3.891 for Unemployment (UNEMP) suggests that, on average, respondents perceive a high level of unemployment in Nasarawa State, particularly in the aftermath of fuel subsidy removal. The standard deviation of 0.7214 indicates a moderate degree of variability in responses, signifying differing perceptions of unemployment levels among respondents. The negative skewness of -0.512 suggests that the distribution of responses leans toward higher unemployment perceptions. Additionally, the kurtosis value of -0.483 indicates a slightly flatter-than-normal distribution, pointing to a broader spread of responses.

For Fuel Subsidy Removal (FSR), the mean value of 4.203 indicates that most respondents strongly perceive the policy change as significant and having far-reaching implications. The relatively low standard deviation of 0.6591 highlights limited variability, reflecting a general consensus among respondents. The negative skewness of -0.774 further shows that the majority view the policy as having a strongly adverse impact. Similarly, the kurtosis value of -0.613 suggests a slightly flatter distribution, indicating a broader spread of opinions around this consensus.

The mean value of 2.438 for Government Employment Initiatives (GEI) reflects that respondents perceive the government's efforts at creating employment opportunities as relatively low or inadequate in mitigating the unemployment challenges caused by fuel subsidy removal. The standard deviation of 0.8197 demonstrates a moderate-to-high variability in responses, which could stem from differing levels of access to, or awareness of, such initiatives. The skewness value of 0.234 indicates a slight tilt toward more favorable perceptions, but the kurtosis value of -0.992 shows a flatter distribution, suggesting a wide dispersion of responses across the scale.

Lastly, the mean value of 4.027 for Price-related Market Responses (PRM) suggests that respondents strongly perceive market price increases (such as transportation, food, and services) as a direct consequence of fuel subsidy removal. The standard deviation of 0.5986 indicates low variability, pointing to a consensus among respondents. The negative skewness of -0.668 suggests that the majority of responses lean toward perceiving negative price impacts. Moreover, the kurtosis value of -0.441 reflects a broader distribution of responses within this consensus.

Overall Insight in the findings reveals that respondent strongly associate fuel subsidy removal with elevated unemployment rates and inflationary market pressures. There is notable dissatisfaction with governmental efforts to mitigate these challenges, as reflected in the low mean value for GEI. The consistent negative skewness across key variables highlights a dominant perception of adverse economic impacts resulting from the policy change.

Table 2: Correlations of Independent Variables

		ES	NK	MG	SMIC	RPIC
UNEMP	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	320				
FRS	Pearson Correlation	..178**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	320	320			
GEI	Pearson Correlation	.206*	.452**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	320	320	320		
PRM	Pearson Correlation	.212**	.384**	.674**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	320	320	320	320	

Source: Field Study, 2025 via SPSS

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: presents the correlation matrix illustrating relationships between the independent variables: Unemployment (UNEMP), Failure of the Rivers State Government to Prosecute Offenders (FRS), Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI), and Poor Remuneration (PRM).

1. UNEMP and FRS: The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.178 is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$). This positive correlation suggests that higher unemployment levels are modestly associated with greater perceptions of the government's failure to prosecute offenders in kidnapping cases. However, the weak strength of the relationship indicates limited overlap between these perceptions.
2. UNEMP and GEI: The Pearson coefficient of 0.206, significant at 0.01, indicates a weak positive correlation between unemployment and issues related to gender equality and inclusion. As unemployment rises, there is a slight increase in concerns about gender-related inclusion, though the relatively low correlation strength implies limited direct association.
3. UNEMP and PRM: A coefficient of 0.212 reveals a weak but significant positive relationship between unemployment and poor remuneration. This suggests a link between perceptions of inadequate pay structures and broader unemployment challenges. Despite its statistical significance, the strength of this relationship remains low.
4. FRS and GEI: The Pearson coefficient of 0.452 reflects a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship. Respondents who perceive government failure in prosecuting offenders are also likely to express concerns about gender equality and inclusion, implying that dissatisfaction with justice systems aligns with perceptions of social representation inequalities.
5. FRS and PRM: A coefficient of 0.384, also statistically significant, reveals a moderate positive correlation between perceptions of poor remuneration and dissatisfaction with

government prosecution efforts. This might suggest that inadequate compensation contributes to weaker enforcement or judicial responses.

6. GEI and PRM: The strong correlation coefficient of 0.674 indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between concerns about gender equality and inclusion and poor remuneration. This suggests that remuneration challenges might disproportionately affect certain demographic groups or align with broader systemic inequalities.

Overall Insight in the matrix reveals significant yet varying relationships among the variables. While unemployment shows weak positive correlations with government prosecution efforts (FRS), gender equality and inclusion (GEI), and poor remuneration (PRM), moderate and strong correlations are evident in relationships involving FRS, GEI, and PRM. These findings underscore interconnected perceptions of socio-economic issues such as justice systems, pay structures, and equality, reflecting complex challenges in addressing unemployment and governance in the region.

Table 3: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.340	.116	.108	.79342	1.822

a. Predictors: (Constant), FRS, GEI, PRM

b. Dependent Variable: UNEMP

Source: Field Study, 2025 via SPSS

The Model Summary Table presents the results of a multiple regression analysis, where the dependent variable is Unemployment (UNEMP) and the independent variables are Failure of the Nasarawa State Government to Prosecute Offenders (FRS), Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI), and Poor Remuneration (PRM).

1. Multiple Correlation Coefficient (R): The value of 0.340 indicates a weak to moderate positive relationship between the independent variables and unemployment. This suggests that changes in FRS, GEI, and PRM are modestly associated with changes in unemployment levels in Nasarawa State.
2. R Square (R^2): The R Square value of 0.116 shows that only 11.6% of the variance in unemployment is explained by the combined influence of FRS, GEI, and PRM. This highlights the low explanatory power of the model, with 88.4% of the variability attributed to other factors not captured in this analysis.
3. Adjusted R Square: The value of 0.108, slightly lower than the R Square, accounts for the number of predictors in the model. This indicates that even after adjusting for model complexity, the predictive power of the model remains weak.
4. Standard Error of the Estimate: The value of 0.79342 represents the average deviation of observed unemployment values from the predicted values based on the model. This suggests a moderate level of variability around the predictions.
5. Durbin-Watson Statistic: The statistic of 1.822 is close to the ideal value of 2, indicating no significant autocorrelation in the residuals. This satisfies an important assumption of multiple regression analysis, ensuring that residuals are independent.

The model indicates a weak to moderate relationship between the independent variables (FRS, GEI, and PRM) and unemployment. However, the low R Square and Adjusted R Square values suggest that the model explains only a small portion of the variation in unemployment, with other unaccounted factors likely playing a larger role. The Durbin-Watson statistic confirms the validity of the residuals' independence, meeting the standard assumptions for regression analysis.

Table 4: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18.736	3	6.245	9.933	.000[b]
	Residual	141.298	225	0.628		
	Total	160.034	228			

a. Dependent Variable: UNEMP (Unemployment)

b. Predictors: (Constant), FRS, GEI, PRM

Source: Field Study, 2025 via SPSS

The ANOVA Table provides critical insights into the statistical significance of the multiple regression model utilized in this study. In the model, Unemployment (UNEMP) is the dependent variable, while the independent variables include Failure of the Government to Prosecute Offenders (FRS), Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI), and Poor Remuneration (PRM).

- Regression Sum of Squares (18.736): This represents the portion of the total variation in unemployment that is explained by the three predictors combined.
- Residual Sum of Squares (141.298): This accounts for the portion of variation in unemployment that remains unexplained by the model.
- Total Sum of Squares (160.034): The total variation in unemployment is the sum of the regression and residual sums of squares.

With 3 degrees of freedom assigned to the regression model (equal to the number of predictors) and 225 degrees of freedom attributed to the residual, the mean squares were calculated:

- Regression Mean Square (6.245): Reflecting the average variation explained by each predictor in the model.
- Residual Mean Square (0.628): Showing the average variation that is unexplained by the model.

The F-statistic, calculated as 9.933, tests whether the overall regression model significantly improves over a model with no predictors. It compares the variance explained by the predictors (regression sum) to the variance left unexplained (residual sum).

- Significance (p-value = 0.000): The associated p-value confirms that the regression model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The probability of obtaining this result by chance is extremely low, affirming that the independent variables FRS, GEI, and PRM collectively have a meaningful and statistically significant impact on unemployment levels in Rivers State.

The ANOVA results validate the inclusion of the predictors in the model and highlight their relevance to understanding the factors contributing to unemployment in the region. These findings underscore the need for appropriate policy interventions to address the identified challenges, particularly government prosecution efforts, gender equality, and remuneration systems.

Table 5: Coefficients[a]

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.262	1.742	0.300	5.805	.000		
	FRS	.421	0.215	0.073	6.189	.000	.126	2.455
	GEI	.154	0.277	0.058	8.529	.005	.362	1.857
	PRM	.413	0.138	0.065	7.362	0.00		2.356
a. Dependent Variable: UNEM								

Source: Field Study, 2025 via SPSS

The Coefficient Table provides key insights into the relationship between the independent variables, FRS (Federal Revenue Sharing), GEI (Government Employment Initiatives), and PRM (Poor Remuneration) and the dependent variable, Unemployment (UNEM).

1. Constant Term: The constant term is 0.262, indicating that when all independent variables are held constant at zero, the predicted level of unemployment is approximately 0.262 units. While statistically significant ($p = 0.000$), this value primarily serves as a baseline and holds limited interpretative value compared to the effects of the predictors.
2. FRS (Federal Revenue Sharing): The unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.421 suggests that for every one-unit increase in FRS, unemployment rises by 0.421 units, holding all other variables constant. The standardized beta coefficient (0.073) indicates a small positive effect size. The t-statistic of 6.189 and significance value ($p = 0.000$) confirm that this relationship is statistically significant. This implies that inefficiencies or misallocations in federal revenue sharing might contribute to rising unemployment.
3. GEI (Government Employment Initiatives): The unstandardized coefficient of 0.154 and standardized beta of 0.058 reveal that a one-unit increase in GEI correlates with a 0.154-unit increase in unemployment, which is contrary to expectations. The t-value of 8.529 and p-value of 0.005 indicate statistical significance. This unexpected positive association suggests that current employment initiatives may be inadequately targeted or implemented, resulting in inefficiencies that exacerbate unemployment rather than alleviating it.
4. PRM (Poor Remuneration): The unstandardized coefficient of 0.413 and standardized beta of 0.065 demonstrate that poor remuneration significantly contributes to rising unemployment. The t-statistic of 7.362 and p-value of 0.000 confirm a strong and statistically significant relationship. This suggests that inadequate compensation in existing jobs discourages job retention and uptake, thereby increasing unemployment levels.
5. Collinearity Statistics: The Tolerance values above 0.1 and VIF values below 10 indicate no multicollinearity concerns within the model. This ensures the predictors are sufficiently independent of one another, allowing valid interpretation of their individual effects.

All three predictors, FRS, GEI, and PRM show statistically significant positive relationships with unemployment, albeit with varying effect sizes. These results highlight systemic challenges in federal revenue allocation, ineffective job creation programs, and inadequate remuneration

structures as key contributors to unemployment in Rivers State. Addressing these issues through targeted policy interventions could help mitigate unemployment and improve socio-economic outcomes.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that the removal of fuel subsidies has significantly contributed to increased unemployment rates in Nigeria. The elimination of fuel subsidies led to a rise in fuel prices, which subsequently increased production and transportation costs. These rising costs resulted in reduced demand for goods and services, leading to lower production levels and diminished employment opportunities. This observation aligns with the research conducted by Akinlo & Odusola (2019) on the impact of petroleum subsidy removal on unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their study revealed that urban unemployment rose sharply due to higher transportation costs and reduced disposable incomes, which particularly impacted low-income households.

Furthermore, the study highlights the adverse effects of fuel subsidy removal on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nasarawa State. SMEs, being key drivers of local economic activity and employment, faced significant increases in operational costs, including expenses related to transportation, raw materials, production, and distribution. These findings are consistent with the research by Olomola & Adewuyi (2020), which explored the socio-economic effects of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria. Their findings showed that, although the government aimed to reduce fiscal deficits, the policy led to rising unemployment, particularly in fuel-reliant industries such as transportation and manufacturing.

Additionally, the study reveals that the removal of fuel subsidies has had significant economic consequences for Nasarawa State's residents. The immediate impact has been a sharp increase in fuel prices, which drove up transportation costs and, consequently, the cost of goods and services across the state. This has resulted in inflation and a decline in the purchasing power of the average citizen. These outcomes align with Odugbesan & Ojo (2018), who investigated the relationship between fuel subsidy removal, inflation, and unemployment in Nigeria. Their findings suggest that fuel price hikes increased production costs, leading firms to reduce their workforce in order to remain competitive.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the elimination of fuel subsidies in Nasarawa State has exacerbated economic challenges by significantly increasing unemployment. Firms, particularly SMEs, experienced rising operating costs due to the sharp increase in fuel prices, forcing many to reduce their workforce or cease operations entirely. The transportation sector, which heavily depends on affordable fuel, has also experienced job losses, further compounding the unemployment crisis.

Moreover, the broader economic effects of subsidy removal such as inflation, reduced consumer spending, and escalating living costs have intensified the difficulties in job creation. While the removal of subsidies was intended to alleviate fiscal pressures, it has inadvertently worsened the unemployment issue in Nasarawa State. This underscores the urgent need for targeted government

interventions, including the establishment of social safety nets and support programs for workers and businesses in affected industries. Without such measures, the long-term consequences on employment and economic stability may hinder the region's growth and development further.

5.2 Recommendations

To mitigate job losses and strengthen economic resilience, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Comprehensive Job Creation and Skills Development Policy: The government should implement a well-rounded strategy focused on job creation and skills development. This should include:
    i. Vocational Training Programs: Equipping unemployed individuals with practical skills to secure jobs.
    ii. Entrepreneurship Support: Providing financial and advisory assistance to small businesses.
    iii. Investment in Labor-intensive Industries: Promoting sectors such as small-scale manufacturing, renewable energy, and agriculture to stimulate employment.
2. Establishment of Technical Training Facilities and Business Incubators: These initiatives would empower unemployed individuals especially youths and low-income populations with resources and marketable skills to engage in profitable economic activities.

By adopting these measures, the government can address the challenges posed by fuel subsidy removal, promote economic stability, and foster sustainable development in Nasarawa State.

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