



## Effect of Public Policy on Food Security in Jalingo: A Reflection on Fuel Subsidy Removal and Border Reopening

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### Abstract

Government is driven by intends and objectives that form its commitment to deliver on its mandate to the citizenry, which often embodies public policies that are capable of creating rippling effects that is both positive and negative to either the target beneficiaries or the general citizens. By shaping public believes, wants, views and how they understand and act towards their political system and leadership. And though there are handful studies on the influence of the masses on public policies, there seems to be less discussion on the ways by which public policies influence household conditions of the citizens. This article therefore, seek to clarify how policies, when enacted; are likely to affect political thoughts, actions, and conditions of the citizenry. Though, the effects are hard to locate within the standard framework of approaches to mass behavior which is generally ignored by program evaluators and policy analysts but, they do exist. Hence, this study, is guided by policy feedback theory, and utilized survey method, specifically interview method in collecting data from randomly selected household in Jalingo Local Government Area. The work found that; there is a correlation between public policy and food insecurity currently ravaging Jalingo and Nigeria as a country; whose multiplier effects goes beyond hunger to affect other segment of human existence such as health, education, and productivity. On border reopening policy to cushioning food insecurity, Nigeria needs to adopt a holistic approach that combines smart economic policies, with practical food support systems in ensuring no citizen goes hungry.

**Keywords:** Public Policy, Food Insecurity, Fuel Subsidy Removal, and Border Reopening.

### Introduction

Public policy as a statement of government's intent and its commitment toward addressing a particular issue or problem affecting the society, often than not have both positive and negative effects on the citizenry. While government's policies are primarily made in order to solve the societal challenges confronting the citizens, one will wonder why the masses are sinking deep into misery while the intent of the public policy was to less their suffering.

At the inception of President Bola Ahmed Tinibu's administration, in his quest to address resource wastage and curtail siphoning of government funds through fuel subsidy regime, the government under his watch quickly announced the removal of its counter-funding in what was popularly known as the subsidy removal. Though, the policy was initiated

with good intention but, it came with a negative consequence or multiplier effect, particularly to the poor Nigerians who directly or indirectly depend on fuel for transportation and source of energy etc.

In Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State, the policy has adversely affected among other things the food security of the households in the Local Government Area, as the supply and pricing of food related items in the region witness a drastic upsurge shortly after the president's subsidy removal speech. In what first look like a brief economic adjustment owing to change of administration, it later turns to be a new normal as prices of goods and service keeps going higher, while the economic bite harder on the ordinary citizens. And even with the new minimum wage increase, household in Jalingo metropolis seems to be sinking deeper into misery. Hence, it is pertinent to assess the impact of public policy such fuel subsidy removal and border reopening policies on household food security.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guides the study:

- i. What is the effect of fuel subsidy removal on the living condition of household in Jalingo Local Government Area?
- ii. To what extend is the level of food insecurity among Jalingo LGA households?
- iii. Is there any noticeable change in the standard of Jalingo LGA households living following border reopening?
- iv. On a general scale, is the living condition of Jalingo LGA households better than it were during the subsidy regime?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to assess impact of public policies such as subsidy removal and border reopening on food insecurity. Specifically,

- i. To identify the effect of fuel subsidy removal on the living conditions of households in Jalingo Local Government Area.
- ii. To ascertain the level of food insecurity effect on the household
- iii. To determine the impact of border reopening policy on household standard of living.
- iv. Ascertain the current situation of the residence as against the era of fuel subsidy

### **Methodology**

This study adopted primary source of data collection, specifically structured interview method was utilized in recording the responses of the respondents being household members of some selected houses in Jalingo Local Government Area.

### **Conceptual Issues**

This paper review literatures on the concept of public policy, food insecurity, fuel subsidy removal, and border opening policy.

### **Concept of Public Policy**

Scholars in the field of public administration typically view public policy as a product that is developed through a series of stages beginning with agenda setting, formulation, implementation, and evaluation. This sequence of processes when abide by, in reaching a public decision can make it to be deemed as democratic or otherwise; which goes to have a direct bearing on the effects of such policy on the citizens. Mettler and Soss (2004), in their study of the consequences of public policy on democratic citizenship; opined that public policies frame the meaning and origins of societal problems, by identifying target groups for government action and defining solutions. And that treatment under a given policy can make a group appear powerful or weak, trustworthy or devious, morally virtuous or morally repugnant.

### **Concept of Food Insecurity**

Food insecurity according to Idzerda, Corrin, Lazarescu, Couture, Eric, Khan, Tarasuk, McIntyre and Garcia (2024), can be seen as the inadequate or insecure access to food which is due to financial constraints. And that household food insecurity (HFI) is an important indicator of material deprivation and a serious chronic public health issue that affects households; with substantial adverse impacts on individuals' health. which the related healthcare costs in People living in food insecure households have poorer self-rated mental physical and oral health greater stress and are more likely to suffer from chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and mood or anxiety disorders.

### **Fuel Subsidy Removal**

The world economic forum defines a fossil fuel subsidy as a deliberate policy action by government that specifically targets oil, gas, coal, or fossil-fuel-based electricity or heat, leading to one or more of the following effects: reduction in the net cost of energy purchased, reducing cost of production or delivery of energy, and or increasing revenues retained by energy suppliers. While Nansal (2024), adopted historic perspective by tracing fuel subsidy in Nigeria to the first time it was introduced in 1977 by the Olusegun Obasanjo administration as a response to the fuel crisis of 1973. The policy was initiated to cushion the effects of the high landed cost of petroleum products following the need to carry out Turn Around Maintenance (TAM) on the refineries. And in the process of time the policy became entrenched in the Nigerian economy been used as a social transfer mechanism to ease the burden of high fuel prices on the masses.

### **Border Opening Policy**

According Washington (2024) stated that a world not divided by militarized borders would help form a world where sustainability and justice take precedence over extraction and exploitation. He went ahead to trace from history that at the first century of the United States' existence, there were zero federal immigration laws, and there were no substantial fences or walls along the US-Mexico border until the late 1990s.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Policy Feedback Theory propounded by Theda Skocpol who refers to the ways policies, once enacted, restructure subsequent political processes. Focusing on two feedback effects; Skocpol believes that new policies may transform state capacities by creating, building upon, or undercutting administrative arrangements; and they may affect the identities, political goals, and capabilities of social groups. Central on this theory is, the order in which events occur determines how policies create new politics; by bringing political considerations to bear on policy analysis, through assessing policies effects on crucial aspects of governance.

Fuel Subsidy Removal and Food Insecurity in Jalingo Local Government Area  
The federal government policy on fuel subsidy, though aimed at reducing government expenditure and redirecting funds to other sectors that will have direct impact on the masses, had come with a far-reaching consequence, particularly in the area of food security. Which the country on a continues bases keep recording an upsurge in:

- Transportation costs due to high prices of fuel.
- Intense struggle among farmers to move produce from rural areas to markets owing to bad road network and heighten in the price of fuel, which has increased the cost of the local produce supplied.

Wherefore, as it is in the other parts of the country, food price in Jalingo, has equally experience a drastic increase, leading to households with limited income finding it difficult to afford three square meals a day.

In essence, fuel subsidy removal indirectly triggered a surge in food inflation, contributing heavily to food insecurity.

## Effect of Food Insecurity on Residents of Jalingo Local Government Area

Because of the high cost of fuel, occasion by the subsidy removal, food insecurity has led to the following turn on the Jalingo Local Government residents.

- **Reduced food consumption:** - Because of the high cost of living, families in Jalingo were seen to have reduced the number of their meals per day, while some have reduced the quantity consume per household member.
- **Dietary compromise:** - People turned to cheaper, less nutritious options as affording balance diet is out of their reach.
- **Increased malnutrition:** - Because of the poor feeding, malnutrition is seen to be on the increase especially among children and pregnant women.
- **Dependency on food aid:** - Some households within the Local Government, particularly among the poorer of the poor, now depend on NGOs and religious bodies for food support. Even as the numbers of street Beggars has increase.

This shows that food insecurity goes beyond hunger; as it affects all segment of human existence such as health, education, and productivity.

## **Border Reopening Policy**

In what may be seen as a glimmer of hope, the recent government policy on border reopening to aid the importation of food items, especially grains like rice, maize, and wheat. Been the federal government response to public outcry over the skyrocketing of food prices. which seem to be yielding the desire output; of increasing the supply of household food items on a lower price.

## **Observable Positive outcomes of Border Reopening Policy in Cushioning Food Insecurity**

- Increase in the supply of food items in the market.
- Gradual reduction in the prices of household food items such as rice, vegetable oil, spaghetti, and other staples.
- A gradual economic relief for low-income earners and market women.
- A competitive pricing that is slowly stabilizing the food market.

This policy, if sustained, could serve as a short-term cushion against food insecurity.

## **Current Situation of the Jalingo Residents**

Based on the local market observation and community reports, the border reopening public policy can be said to have the following effects on the residents of Jalingo Local Government Area:

- Though food items are still expensive, but not as high as they were immediately after the fuel subsidy removal.
- Cross-border trade is bringing in more variety and quantity of food stuff that is gradually reducing the cost of local food products.
- Farmers and middlemen are experiencing loss and still struggling to maintain a lower sowing cost in the current farming session, due to high input costs, worsened by fuel prices.
- There is a delicate balance between national food production and import reliance.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the review of the two federal government policies suggested that there is correlation between public policy and the food insecurity that is currently ravaging the country. This is because, it has been observed that fuel subsidy removal created an economic ripple that worsened food insecurity in Jalingo, which indirectly triggered a surge in food inflation by contributing heavily to food insecurity. Whose multiplier effects goes beyond hunger to affects other segment of human existence such as health, education, and productivity. However, the recent policy shift of border reopening for food importation has shown a positive trend in food affordability.

Going forward therefore, Nigeria must strive to adopt a holistic approach that combines smart economic policies with practical food support systems to ensure no citizen

goes hungry. Wherefore, if the border opening policy can be sustained, it could serve as both short and long-term policy to cushioning food insecurity.

### Recommendations

From the findings of this paper, it suffices to say that; in order to tackle food insecurity in Jalingo Local Government Area and beyond: the followings need to be done.

1. **Subsidize agriculture**, not fuel – Government needs to support farmers with inputs and logistics particularly in this farming session, so that there will be low cost of production that will stabilize the future cost of food.
2. Improve rural infrastructure such as accessible road for easy transportation of goods.
3. Encourage local food processing and storage facilities.
4. Strengthen policies that balance importation with local production.
5. Implement direct food assistance programs for vulnerable households.

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