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## IMPLICATIONS OF FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL ON CHOIR REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCES IN LAGOS AND ABUJA

### Abstract

*The removal of fuel subsidy by the Federal Government of Nigeria in May, 2023 has far-reaching implications on the masses. Although it was projected to have economic benefits for Nigerians in order to address inadequate social amenities and its effects. This study examined the ripple effects of federal government's fuel subsidy removal policy on choristers in various churches located in Abuja and Lagos. This was with a view to determining its effect on the rate of attendance at choir rehearsals, performances and also offers suggestions to choristers on coping mechanisms to their socio-economic situations. The study is hinged on the Theory of Social Conflicts in tandem with two research questions. The study adopted descriptive survey design and the population used as sample were seventy-two (72) choirmasters from various denominations in Lagos State and Abuja, where the researchers reside. A four-point Likert Type Rating Scale Questionnaire: Implications of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Choristers Questionnaire (IFSRCQ) was used to collect data from the participants. Findings revealed that the removal of fuel subsidy had negative effects on choristers' activities including poor rehearsal attendance. Given the challenges posed by fuel subsidy removal, it is essential for music directors and church leaders to continue exploring innovative solutions to mitigate its impact on choir performances. Building on the efforts already made by the stakeholders, further measures can be taken to enhance attendance at rehearsals and performances. Implementation of flexible rehearsal schedules, leveraging technology to facilitate remote participation, and fostering a sense of community and commitment among choristers among other measures will ameliorate some of the challenges. In addition, acknowledging the complexities of the situation and working collaboratively, the church and choir leaders can help their choirs thrive despite economic challenges.*

**Key words:** *Fuel Subsidy Removal, Church Choir.*

### Introduction

There have been repeated attempts by various governments in Nigeria to remove the subsidy on petroleum products due to so many reasons. The announcement by the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu-

led government of the removal of fuel subsidy on 20th May, 2023, in his inaugural speech, has had far-reaching implications on the masses. Although the removal was projected to have economic benefits for the government overtly, but this is at the expense of Nigerians due to poorly planned social amenities to cushion the effect as the practice in other climes prior to removal of fuel subsidies.

While the entire nation is still grappling with the far-reaching economic and environmental implications of this policy, a nuanced examination reveals a significant impact on choristers in Nigerian churches. Specifically, the need to explore the ripple effects on choir rehearsals and performance schedules and additionally the intricate consequences on the country's religious and cultural fabric warrant attention. The operational dynamics of choristers provides for constant rehearsals on weekly basis, impediment such as increments in transport fares incurred by the choristers would mean that many choristers would not turn up at rehearsals because basically many of them would not be able to afford the fares. This negative development calls for serious attention of the church councils. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the implications of fuel subsidy removal and its implementation on the choir rehearsals and performances in churches in Nigeria.

## **Statement of Problem**

Existing studies on the effects of fuel subsidy's removal among Nigerians by Akpan, & Udoh, (2013); Tella,(2012), Saibu & Akinbobola (2017) have concentrated on the impacts of fuel subsidy removal in the areas of political, economic, academic and cultural livelihood of Nigerians. However, little or no studies have been carried out to assess the implications of fuel subsidy removal on choir rehearsal attendance and choral performances in Nigeria. Considering the important roles of the Church choir in Christian worship in the light of the economic crunch caused by the removal of fuel subsidy by the government, studies on the effects of fuel subsidy removal among Nigerians choirs requires in-depth scholarly attention. This study draws on case studies of choristers in churches in Lagos and Abuja to illustrate challenges faced by musicians in the wake of fuel subsidy's removal and also proffers recommendations to reduce the negative impacts.

## **Scope of Study**

This study is limited to the implications of government policy on fuel subsidy's removal on church choristers in Lagos and Abuja, owing to the fact that the researchers reside in the two Nigerian cities..

## **Research Questions**

1. To what extent does the fuel subsidy's removal affect the frequency, duration, and quality of choir rehearsals of churches in Lagos and Abuja?
2. What coping strategies and measures can choir directors and church leaders adopt to mitigate the negative impacts of fuel subsidy removal on choir rehearsals and performances?
3. How does fuel subsidy removal influence the overall performance quality, motivation, and morale of choristers in Nigerian churches, and what are the variations in impact across different regions and church denominations?

## **Aim and objectives of the study**

The main aim is to investigate impacts of fuel subsidy's removal on choir rehearsals and performances in Lagos and Abuja. The set objectives are to:

- i. examine the effects of fuel subsidy removal on the frequency and duration of choir rehearsals in Nigerian churches.
- ii. investigate the impact of fuel subsidy removal on the financial resources available for choir performances and activities in Nigeria.
- iii. assess the influence of fuel subsidy removal on the morale and motivation of choristers in Nigerian churches.
- iv. identify the coping strategies adopted by choirs in Nigerian churches in response to the challenges posed by fuel subsidy removal.
- iv. proffer recommendations for stakeholders, including church leaders, government agencies, and choir directors, on how to mitigate the negative implications of fuel subsidy removal on choir rehearsals and performances in Nigeria.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the resource dependence theory. The theory was proposed by Pfeffer and Salancik in 1978. The theory suggests that organizations depend on external resources such as fuel and electricity to function effectively. The theory further suggests that changes in the availability and cost of external resources can have a significant impact on the operations of organizations. According to the theory, organizations try to reduce their dependence on external resources by diversifying their resource base, building relationships with resource providers, and developing alternative sources of supply. In this study, the resource dependence theory provides a framework for understanding the potential implications of fuel subsidy removal on the activities of choir rehearsals and performances in churches in Nigeria. The theory was employed to identify the various challenges that came up as a result of the fuel subsidy removal and provide recommendations to mitigate those challenges.

## **Review of Related Literature**

According to Civic Keypoint (2023), fuel subsidy can be properly defined as government effort in paying for the difference between the pump price of fuel at the petrol station and actual cost of importation of the product. By paying the difference, the government enables fuel to be sold at a lower price so as to help ease the burden of its citizens. Fuel subsidy is a grant of financial aid from the government used to maintain the low price of petroleum products. This is also in line with the view of Onyeizugbe & Onwuka (2012), fuel subsidy means that a proportion of the amount consumers are to pay for the usage of petroleum products is paid by the government in order to relieve the burden of the price. In the context of Nigeria, the implementation of the fuel subsidy removal since 2023 has caused a whole lot of problems to the citizens and this is reflected in both rehearsals and performances of choirs in Nigeria.

## **The Impact of the Removal of Fuel Subsidy on Music Performance**

Fuel subsidy is a government policy that ensures that the price of fuel remains affordable for citizens. The removal of fuel subsidy has had far-reaching effects on the various sectors, including the music industry. According to Akpan and Udoh (2013), fuel subsidy removal is a highly controversial issue in

Nigeria due to its potential impact on the economy and the livelihood of the citizens. In this literature review, we explored the impact of the removal of fuel subsidy on music performances by choristers in churches in Lagos and Abuja. The removal of fuel subsidy has been a contentious issue in Nigeria for many years. In 2012, the Nigerian government attempted the removal of fuel subsidy, which led to protests across the country. The removal of fuel subsidy made a significant impact on various sectors of the economy, including the music industry.

## Impact on Music Performance

The removal of fuel subsidy had a negative impact on music performance in Nigeria. According to Akpan and Udoh (2013), one of the major ways that the removal of fuel subsidy affected the music industry was through the increase in transportation costs. The authors argued that with the removal of fuel subsidy, the cost of transportation increased significantly, making it more expensive for choristers to attend rehearsals as often as before. This resulted in low turnout at rehearsals and poor attendance during actual performances.

Olaniyan and Ogunrinola (2019) noted that another way the fuel subsidy removal affected the music industry was through the increase in the cost of living. With the increase in the cost of fuel, the cost of living increased, which affected the purchasing power of music fans. This resulted in fewer music performances and a decrease in the number of music fans attending concerts. Even in churches, there is limit to the number of musical programs organized by the choir department because of the expenses that would be procured. Owuoye and Adeleke (2018) also highlighted that the removal of fuel subsidy had a significant impact on the cost of musical instruments and equipment. Many of the musical instruments and equipment used by Nigerian musicians are imported, and the cost of importing these items increased significantly with the removal of fuel subsidy. This resulted in many churches not being able to afford the necessary equipment, which in turn affected the quality of the choristers' musical performances. In the same vein, the authors highlight the importance of fuel in transportation to and from rehearsals and services, as well as the use of generators to power equipment and musical instruments.

## Methodology

The instrument used in this study involved questionnaire that was administered to choir masters and music directors in Abuja and Lagos state respectively. The instrument utilized was designed based on the research objectives and reviewed by experts in the field to ensure its validity and reliability. The questionnaire consists both closed and open-ended questions, which were designed to obtain information on the perceptions of choir members, directors, and organizers regarding the potential impact of fuel subsidy removal on their activities. To ensure the reliability and validity of the responses, the researchers conducted a pilot study in a selected region before administering the survey questionnaire to all participants. The pilot study helped to identify potential issues with the questionnaire and to make necessary adjustments before the final survey administration. In addition, the researchers employed purposive sampling technique to select the participants for the study. This technique was used to ensure that the sample adequately represents the target population and to improve the generalize ability of the study results.

Questionnaire Design and Validation. The questionnaire consisted of four sections:

1. Demographic Information: This section collected data on respondents' age, sex, educational background, and choir experience.

2. Perceptions of Fuel Subsidy Removal: This section assessed respondents' perceptions of the impact of fuel subsidy removal on their choir activities, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).
3. Impact on Choir Performances: This section evaluated the specific effects of fuel subsidy removal on choir performances, using a 3-point scale (1 = significant impact, 2 = moderate impact, 3 = minimal impact).
4. Coping Mechanisms: This section explored the strategies employed by choirs to mitigate the effects of fuel subsidy removal, using open-ended questions.

## **Pilot Study and Reliability Testing**

A pilot study was conducted with a sample of 20 choir masters and music directors to test the questionnaire's validity and reliability. The pilot study revealed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85, indicating high internal consistency. Necessary adjustments were made to the questionnaire before administering it to the final sample.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

The questionnaire was administered to the selected participants, and data were collected over a period of six weeks. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (ANOVA and regression analysis) were used to analyze the data, with the help of SPSS version 25. Finally, the researchers used relevant literature on fuel subsidy removal and its potential impact on the music performances in Nigeria to support their findings. The literature review helped to contextualize the study and to provide a theoretical foundation for the research.

## **Sampling Technique and Respondent Selection**

To ensure the participation of the correct respondents from the target population, the researchers employed a purposive sampling technique. The technique was used to select 100 choir masters and music directors from Abuja and Lagos State. The sample was chosen based on their expertise and experience in choir performances. This involved selecting respondents who were directly involved in choir activities in Nigerian churches.

## **Inclusion Criteria**

The following inclusion criteria were used to select respondents:

1. Active choir membership: Respondents must be active members of a church choir in Nigeria.
2. Leadership role: Respondents must hold a leadership position within the choir, such as choir director, music director, or worship leader.
3. Familiarity with fuel subsidy removal: Respondents must have been affected by the fuel subsidy removal and have firsthand experience of its impact on choir activities.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

A questionnaire was administered via Google Forms to the selected respondents. The collected data were collated and analyzed using quantitative analysis methods. The results are presented in tables and histograms, which illustrate the differences in the percentage of respondents' responses to the questions asked.

## Findings and Discussion

Data collected from the administered questionnaire via the goggle form were collated and analyzed using quantitative analysis. This is represented by the use of tables and histogram showing the difference in the percentage of the respondents on the question asked.

Section A: Biodata of the respondents.

**Table 1**  
The data

GENDER		
	Frequency	Percent
FEMALE	30	41.7
MALE	42	58.3
Total	72	100

### Gender Distribution

presents the distribution of gender among the 72 choristers who responded to the questionnaire. There are two categories: FEMALE and MALE. The total number of individuals in the sample is 72, making up 100% of the sample, 30 females (41.7%) and 42 males (58.3%).

MARITAL STATUS		
	Frequency	Percent
MARRIED	50	69.4
SINGLE	22	30.6
Total	72	100

**Table 2: Marital Status**

The total number of individuals in the sample is 72, making up 100% of the sample. The sample consists of 50 married individuals (69.4%) and 22 single individuals (30.6%).

EMPLOYEMENT STATUS		
	Frequency	Percent
Working Class	58	80.6
Applicant	6	8.3
Student	7	9.7
Retiree	1	1.4
Total	72	100

**Table 3: Employment Status**

The total number of individuals in the sample is 72, making up 100% of the sample. The sample consists of 58 working class (80.6 %), 6 applicants (8.3 %), 1 student (1.4 %) and 1 retiree (1.4%).

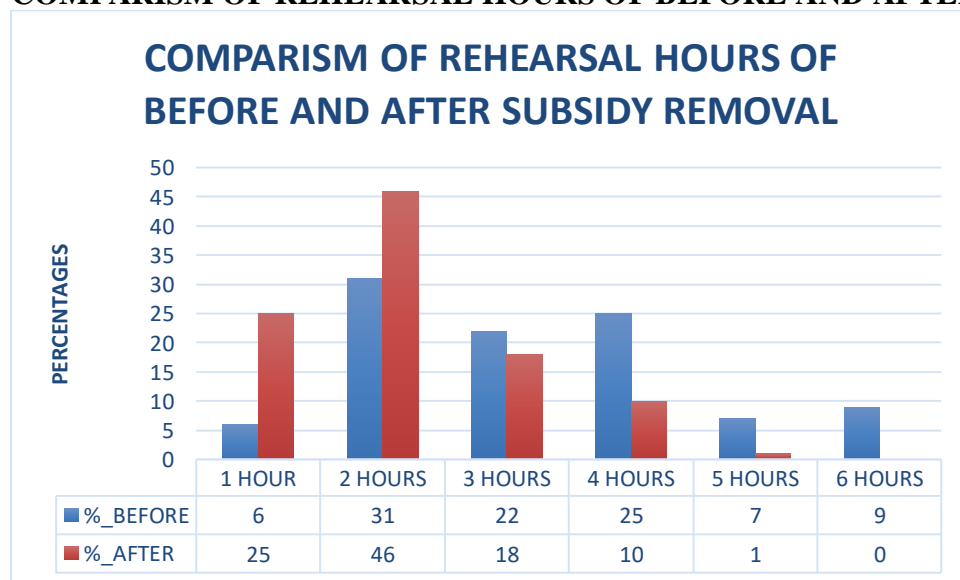
Years spent in the choir		
	Frequency	Percent
0-10	11	15.3
11-20	20	28.2
21-30	12	16.7
31-40	28	38.9
41-50	24	33.3
51-60	7	9.7
61+	1	1.4
Total	72	100

**Table 4: Choir Experience**

The total number of individuals in the sample is 72, making up 100% of the sample. The sample consists of years spent in the choir: 21-30, 12 (16.7%), 31-40, 28 (38.9%), 41-50, 24 (33.3%), 51-60, 7 (9.7%) and 60 above, 1 (1.4%).

Research Question 1: Does the fuel subsidy removal have effects on the rehearsal of the choirs?

#### COMPARISM OF REHEARSAL HOURS OF BEFORE AND AFTER SUBSIDY REMOVAL



COMPARISM OF REHEARSAL HOURS OF BEFORE AND AFTER SUBSIDY REMOVAL		
	%_BEFORE	%_AFTER
1 HOUR	6	25
2 HOURS	31	46
3 HOURS	22	18
4 HOURS	25	10

5 HOURS	7	1
6 HOURS	9	0
Total	100	100

**Table 6: Comparism of attendance at choir rehearsal hours**

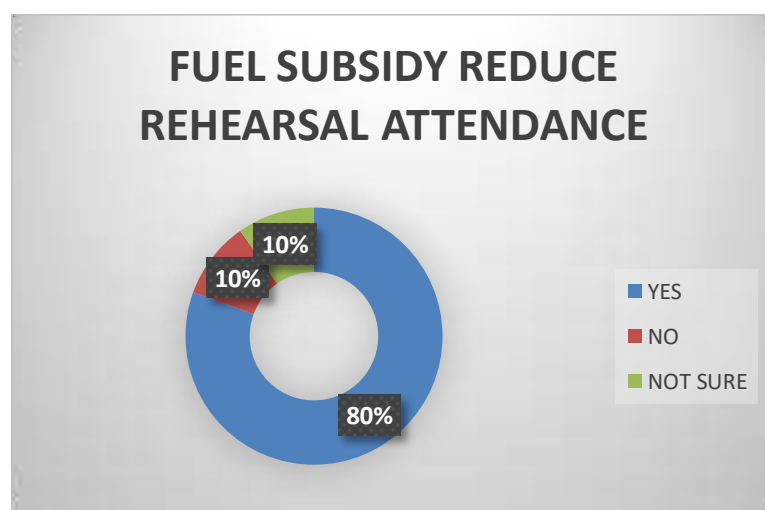
The removal of the fuel subsidy has led to a significant reduction in the amount of time individuals spend on rehearsals. Specifically:

The percentage of individuals rehearsing for shorter durations (1 hour and 2 hours) increased notably, from 6% to 25% for 1 hour and from 31% to 46% for 2 hours.

The percentage of individuals rehearsing for longer durations (3 hours, 4 hours, 5 hours, and 6 hours) decreased. For example, those rehearsing for 4 hours dropped from 25% to 10%, and those rehearsing for 6 hours dropped from 9% to 0%.

This suggests that the removal of the fuel subsidy has resulted in individuals significantly reducing their rehearsal time, likely due to increased costs or decreased availability of resources necessary for longer rehearsal periods.

#### FUEL SUBSIDY REDUCE REHEARSAL ATTENDANCE



FUEL SUBSIDY REDUCED REHEARSAL ATTENDANCE		
	Frequency	Percent
YES	58	80.6
NO	7	9.7
NOT SURE	7	9.7
Total	72	100

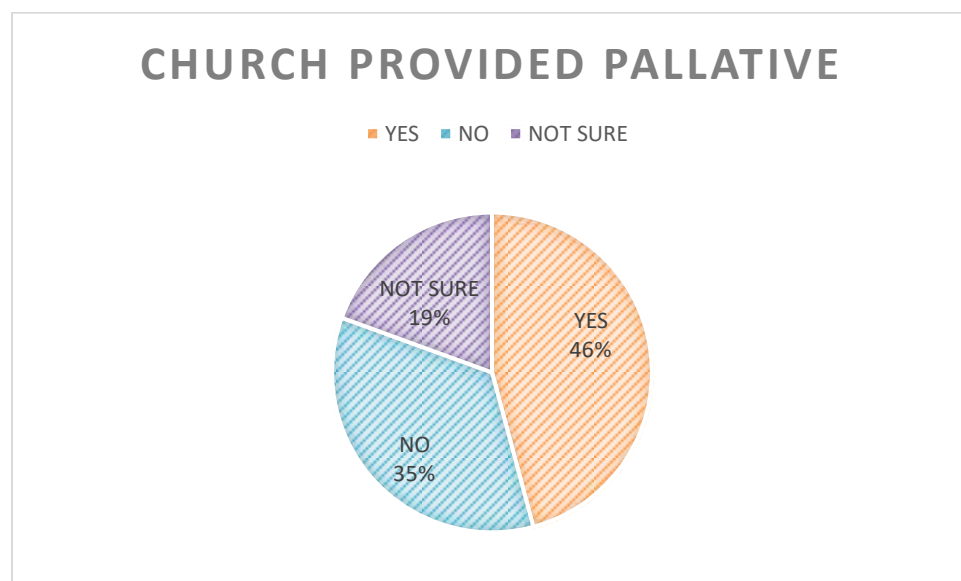
**Table 7: Fuel Subsidy Reduced rehearsal attendance**



A substantial majority of the sample, 58 individuals (80.6%), opined that the fuel subsidy reduced rehearsal attendance. Only 7 individuals (9.7%) did not think that the fuel subsidy affected rehearsal attendance, while another 7 individuals (9.7%) were uncertain about its impact.

This suggests that the removal of the fuel subsidy was perceived by most individuals as having a negative effect on their ability to attend rehearsals. The high percentage of individuals who responded "YES" indicates a strong consensus on the adverse impact of the fuel subsidy removal on rehearsal attendance.

Research Question 2: Was there any measure to ameliorate the effects?



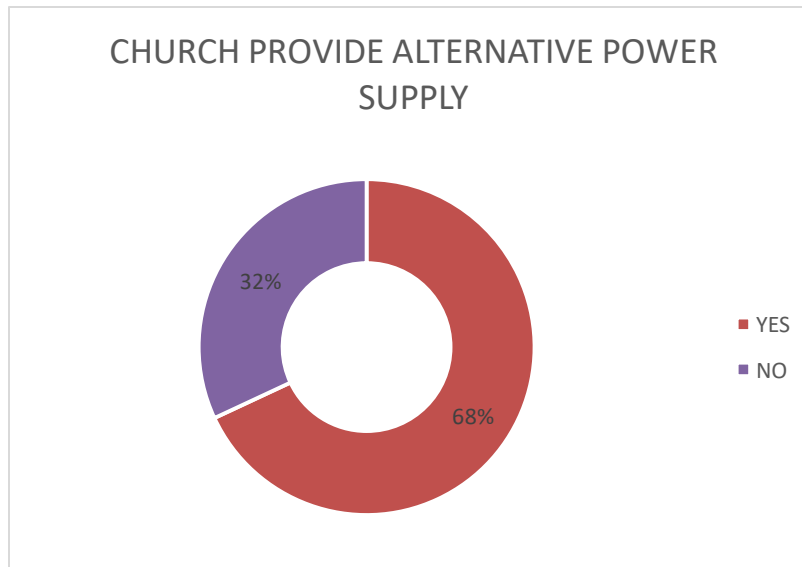
CHURCH PROVIDED PALLATIVE		
	Frequency	Percent
YES	33	45.8
NO	25	34.7
NOT SURE	14	19.4
Total	72	100

**Table 8: Church provided palliatives**

The data presents the responses of a sample of 72 individuals regarding whether their church provided palliative measures after the removal of the fuel subsidy. The responses indicate a mixed perception regarding the provision of palliative measures by the church after the removal of the fuel subsidy: 33 individuals (45.8%) reported that their church provided palliative measures. 25 individuals (34.7%) reported that their church did not provide any palliative measures. 14 individuals (19.4%) were not sure whether any palliative measures were provided by their church.

This suggests that while a significant portion of the sample (nearly half) acknowledges receiving support from their church, a substantial number of individuals either did not receive any palliative measures or were unsure about it. The data indicates that there is room for improvement in communication and support from the church to better address the needs of its members in response to the fuel subsidy removal.

### CHURCH PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE POWER SUPPLY



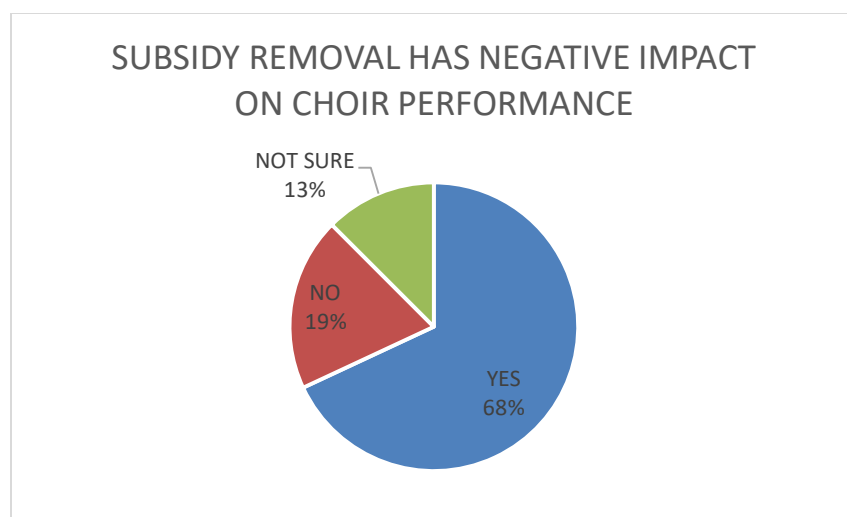
CHURCH PROVIDED ALTERNATIVE POWER SUPPLY		
	Frequency	Percent
YES	49	68.1
NO	23	31.9
Total	72	100

**Table 9: Church's provision of alternative power supply**

The data presents the responses of a sample of 72 individuals regarding whether their church provides an alternative power supply during choir rehearsals. A majority of the sample, 49 individuals (68.1%), reported that their church provided alternative power supply during choir rehearsals. In contrast, 23 individuals (31.9%) indicated that their church did not. This suggests that most churches in the sample are proactive in ensuring a reliable power supply by providing alternatives. However, there is still a significant minority of churches (nearly one-third) that do not provide an alternative power supply, indicating a potential area for improvement in supporting the needs of their Choir members during Rehearsals.

Research Question 3: Did the fuel subsidy removal have effects on the performance of the choristers across board?

**Table 10:**  
**SUBSIDY REMOVAL HAS NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CHOIR PERFORMANCE**



SUBSIDY REMOVAL HAS NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CHOIR PERFORMANCE		
	Frequency	Percent
YES	49	68.1
NO	14	19.4
NOT SURE	9	12.5
Total	72	100

**Table 10: Subsidy removal has negative impact on choir performance**

The table above present survey results on whether the subsidy removal has had a negative impact on choir performance across the board. A significant majority of respondents (68.1%) believes that the subsidy removal has had a negative impact on choir performance. A smaller proportion (19.4%) does not believe the subsidy removal has had this effect, while 12.5% of respondents are uncertain. Therefore, based on this survey, it can be concluded that the subsidy removal as perceived by most respondents to negatively impact choir performance.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria has had a profound impact on the nation's choral community, manifesting in a multitude of ways that threaten the very fabric of this vital artistic expression. The surge in transportation costs and electricity tariffs has not only increased the financial burden on choir members but also led to a decline in attendance, participation, and overall performance quality.

The far-reaching implications of this policy decision underscore the interconnectedness of economic and cultural development. As the nation grapples with the challenges of economic reform, it is essential to

recognize the critical role that the arts play in shaping national identity, fostering community engagement, and providing a platform for creative expression.

This study serves as a clarion call to policymakers, cultural institutions, and stakeholders to collaborate in developing strategies that mitigate the adverse effects of economic policies on the arts. By investing in alternative energy sources, providing subsidies and grants to arts organizations, and implementing policies that support the growth of the creative industry, Nigeria can ensure that its rich cultural heritage continues to thrive despite economic challenges. It is essential for policymakers to consider the impact of their decisions on various sectors of the economy, including the music industry, to avoid unintended negative consequences.

Ultimately, the future of choral music in Nigeria hangs in the balance, and it is our collective responsibility to safeguard this precious aspect of our cultural legacy. By working together, we can create a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive cultural landscape that benefits all Nigerians and also contributes to the nations' social, economic, and cultural development.

## Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- I. Introduction of virtual rehearsals in order to reduce the physical rehearsals.
- II. Decentralization of rehearsals for members living in the same environment.
- III. The church should empower the choristers by providing employment opportunities for choristers within and outside the church.
- IV. The choir leadership should educate members on financial prudence and management during economic meltdown.

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