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Petrol price increase and cost of living among students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Anambra State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The bottom-form flabbergasted effect of fuel subsidy removal, which resulted in a persistent hike in petrol prices, has triggered a blatant surge in the cost of living for the citizens, and the university students are mainly the hardest-hit group. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the connection between rising gas prices and living expenses for Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka (NAU) students. 250 undergraduate students who lived on campus were given questionnaires using a descriptive survey approach. The objectives of the study were threefold: to examine the relationship between purchasing power, housing costs, transportation costs, and students' cost of living at NAU; to find out the mitigating effect of the university management and government to curb the adverse effect of the increase in fuel prices on the students in NAU; and to find out the coping strategies used by students in NAU. Using Pearson correlation analysis, the findings, among others, disclosed a significant relationship between rising fuel prices and students' purchasing power (proxied by inflation rate), housing costs, and transportation expenses. This study found that the government and university management have not done anything to mitigate the effect of fuel price increases on the living costs of students in NAU. The study also found that the strategies used by the students to cope include reducing food expenses, adjusting their budgets, using alternative modes of transportation such as trekking, limiting social activities, changing daily routines, changing feeding habits, and borrowing from friends and families. This study stresses the urgent need for government measures and structural economic reforms to reduce students' helplessness and fuel price instability.

1. INTRODUCTION

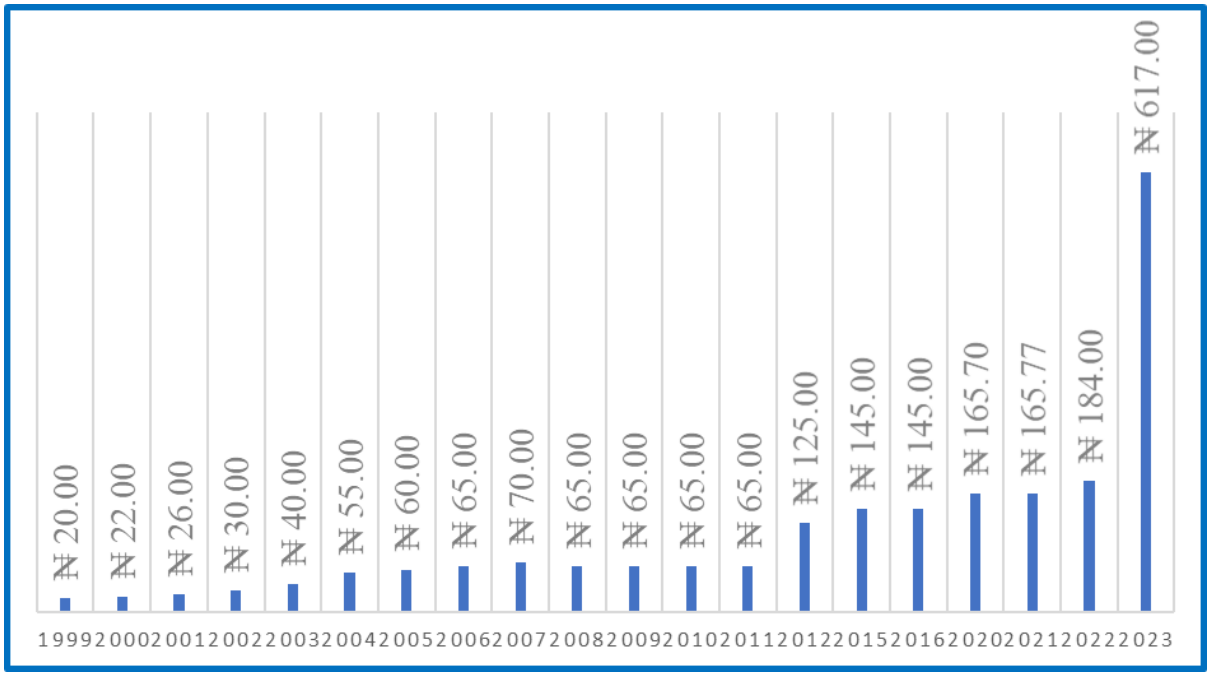
Nigeria, an oil-producing economy, has experienced persistent increases in fuel prices with implications for household expenditures and overall cost of living. Petroleum remains one of the most valuable natural resources in Nigeria and globally, serving as a key input in growth-related economic activities. Oil prices continue to modify global economic growth, industrial production, inflation, interest rates, food prices, poverty levels, and wider socioeconomic conditions, while also reflecting developments in the global oil market (Alvarez et al., 2011). In Nigeria, increases in petroleum product prices are widely associated with inflationary pressures and declining economic welfare (Okpo and Okonkwo, 2025).

Fuel price adjustments in Nigeria date back to 1973, following global oil market shocks that altered international demand and supply conditions. Since then, successive administrations have implemented incremental fuel price changes driven by fiscal pressures, subsidy policies, global oil market forces, and reform efforts geared towards aligning domestic prices with international trends. These adjustments have consistently influenced transportation costs, with spillover effects on the prices of goods and services.

During the Yar'Adua administration (2007–2010), fuel prices remained largely stable, helping to maintain relative stability in transportation costs. In contrast, the Jonathan administration (2012–2015) implemented partial subsidy removal in response to fiscal pressures, resulting in a 116.92 percent increase in fuel prices and corresponding increases in transportation costs. Subsequent policy

reversals and subsidy reinstatement led to price fluctuations, including a 10.31 percent reduction by 2015. Under the Buhari administration, fuel prices increased by approximately 66.67 percent, reflecting global oil market forces and domestic fiscal constraints. In later years, fuel prices rose by over 124 percent as economic issues persisted, with noteworthy implications for transportation costs (Elekwashi, Akendor, and Godwin, 2024).

Fig. 1.1 Fuel Price Fluctuation from 1993 to 2023

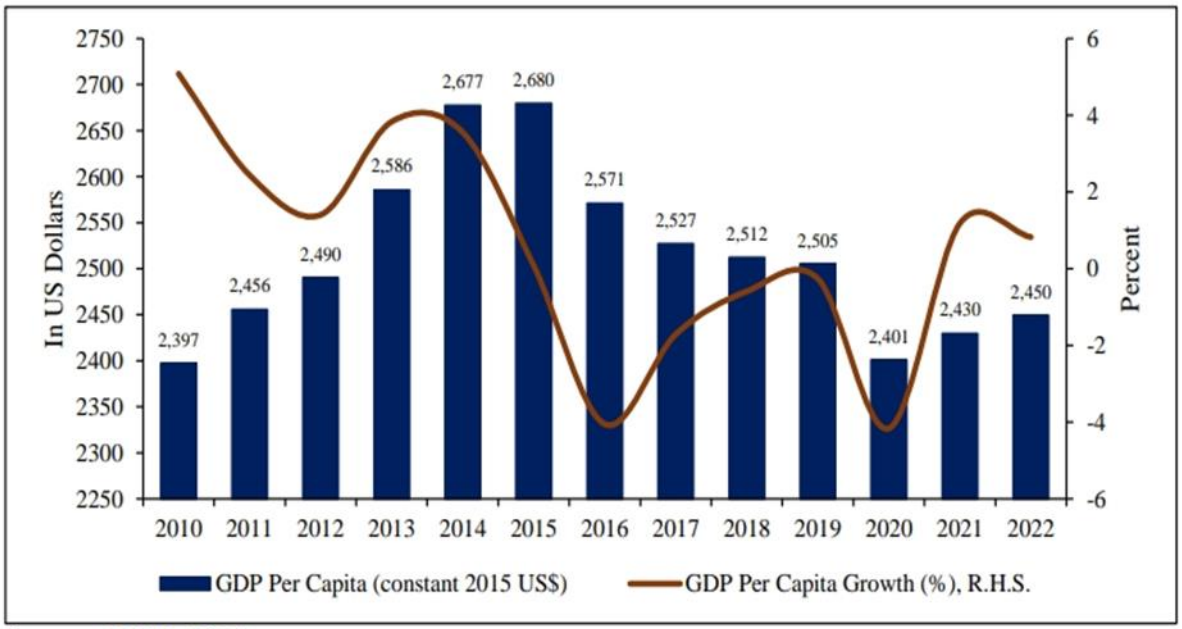


Under the Tinubu administration (2023), fuel subsidy removal was implemented as part of wider efforts to enhance fiscal sustainability and correspond to global energy transition objectives. This policy change led to an increase in fuel prices from ₦195 per litre to ₦540 per litre in June 2023, rising further to ₦617 per litre by July 2023 (Al Jazeera, 2023). By December 2024, fuel prices had increased to approximately ₦1,000 per liter, causing higher transportation costs and increased prices of goods and services, with corresponding effects on household living costs (Autogirl, 2024). While subsidy removal is frequently justified based on efficiency and fiscal grounds, its short- to medium-term welfare implications continue to be a key policy concern (Ude, 2023).

Fuel price fluctuations are influenced by instability in key oil-producing regions, global crude oil demand and supply interactions, decisions by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and domestic subsidy policies. Merino and Ortiz (2005) argue that oil inventories reflect underlying supply–demand interactions and help explain movements in global oil prices. Crude oil remains a central component of modern economies, and changes in pricing decisions by producing countries, alongside unexpected economic developments, can induce volatility in oil markets (Eryigit, 2009). Additional determinants of oil price variations include declining global crude oil reserves, political instability in producing countries, OPEC quota decisions, and speculative activities in response to uncertain market conditions (Pirog, 2004).

The removal of petroleum subsidies affects fuel prices and transmits costs across the economy through both informational and macroeconomic channels. Announcements of subsidy reductions signal higher expected costs to petroleum marketers, fuel dealers, and transport operators, who often pass these costs on to consumers through higher pump prices (Henry et al., 2020). At the macroeconomic level, the strong interdependence between petroleum prices, transportation costs, and production costs implies that increases in fuel prices raise the cost of transportation and power generation, which subsequently translate into higher prices of goods and services.

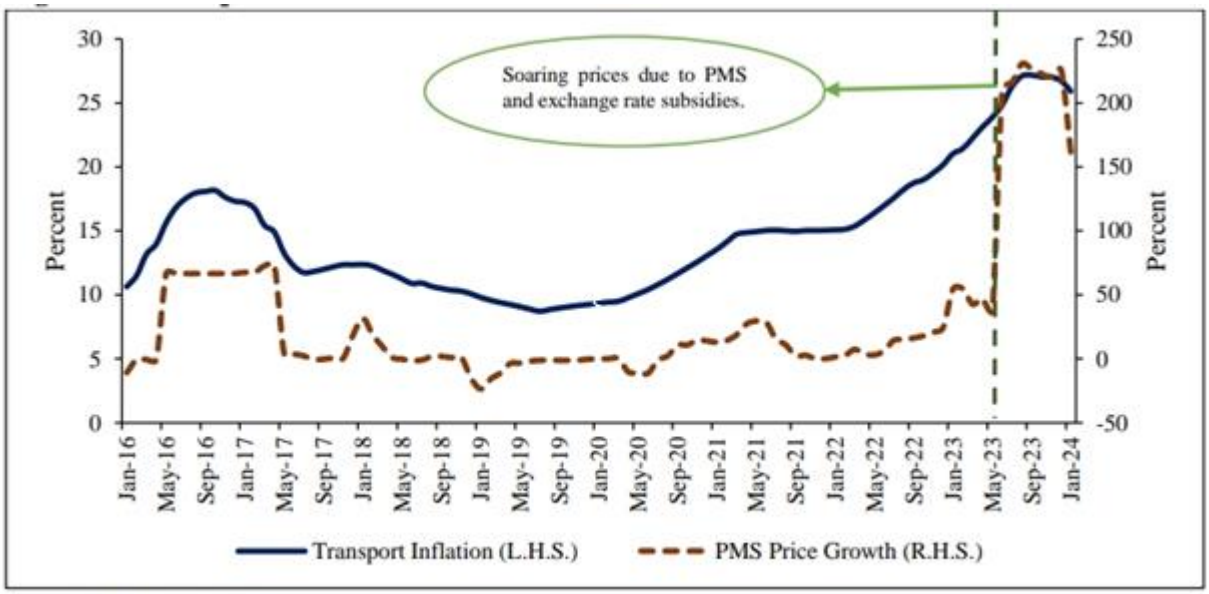
Fig. 1.2. The Living Cost Of Households In Nigeria



Source: WDI, 2023.

Nigeria's inflation rate has increased markedly over the past eight years, entailing consequences for real incomes and purchasing power. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2024), inflation has remained in double digits since February 2016, driven largely by rising food prices. This trend reflects a combination of domestic factors—including currency devaluation, infrastructure deficits, economic shortcomings, and Central Bank financing of government expenditure, as well as external shocks such as the 2016 decline in global oil prices, the 2019 land border closure, the COVID-19 pandemic, global supply chain interruptions, and the Russia–Ukraine conflict. In April 2024, inflation reached 33.69 percent, the highest level recorded since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999. Over the same period, real GDP growth averaged approximately 1.4 percent, compared with an average of 6.5 percent in the preceding eight years.

Fig. 1.3 Transportation Inflation And Petrol Price Increase In Nigeria.



Source: NBS, 2024b.

Rising fuel prices have direct implications for students, who typically face binding budget constraints. Increases in transportation costs raise the prices of essential goods, including food and accommodation, thereby increasing students' overall cost of living. Higher fuel prices also alter housing costs, as landlords transfer rising operating and transportation expenses to tenants. In addition, an unreliable public power supply has increased dependence on privately generated electricity, further elevating students' living expenses (Akpojotor, Mordi, Onoka, and Ogah, 2025).

At Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, transportation fares within the campus increased from ₦100 in 2023 to between ₦150 and ₦200 in subsequent periods, indicating wider fuel price increases. As transportation costs absorb a larger share of students' budgets, expenditures on food, accommodation, and educational materials are increasingly constrained. Changes in fuel prices therefore bear direct implications for students' cost of living through transportation-related expenditure channels. Against this background, this study examines the relationship between fuel price increases and the cost of living among students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between purchasing power, housing costs, transportation costs, and students' cost of living at Nnamdi Azikiwe University.
2. To find out the mitigating effect of the university management and government to curb the adverse effect of the increase in fuel prices on the students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University.
3. To find out the coping strategies used by students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Cost-Push Inflation Theory

The cost-push inflation theory, proposed by John Maynard Keynes (1936), explains inflation as the outcome of rising production costs, including wages, raw materials, and other inputs. According to Keynes, when increases in input costs are transmitted to output prices, consumers' real purchasing power decreases if earnings do not adjust proportionally. This type of inflation, also called supply-side inflation, occurs when essential inputs have limited substitutes. The main sources of cost-push inflation include oil price shocks, farm price shocks, import price shocks, and wage-push inflation.

The theory assumes that firms have some market power, allowing them to pass on increased costs to consumers. Historical evidence indicates that the oil crises of the 1970s, particularly price increases imposed by OPEC member states, contributed significantly to inflation in industrialized economies. Large increases in petroleum prices tend to affect most products, generating persistent inflationary effects due to adaptive expectations and price–wage feedback dynamics (Kenton, 2025).

This theory is relevant to the current study because it delivers an analytical framework to examine the relationship between production costs and the cost of living. Increases in wages, taxes, or raw material prices are transmitted to consumers through higher product prices, affecting household expenditure patterns.

2.2 Review of Empirical Literature

Several empirical studies have investigated the relationship between petrol price increases and many socio-economic variables. For instance, Emughedi (2025), using survey research, investigated the effect of an increase in petrol prices on household purchasing power in Nigeria. The study revealed that an increase in fuel prices significantly affects the budgets of the household, leading to adjustments in spending patterns, which again increase the cost of transport and consumption.

Yodah, Ouma, Machel, and Ajwang (2024) looked at how changes in crude oil prices affected Kenya's consumer price index. It is clear that the values match the predicted market behavior of the variables being studied. As a result, the public should be ready for short-term increases in CPI values and oil costs. Additionally, the analysis shows that there is a long-term correlation between CPI and important crude kinds. The government should give the investigation and use of alternative energy sources top priority in order to reduce an excessive dependence on fossil fuels.

Otu and James (2024) investigated how the elimination of gasoline subsidies affected the quality of life in Nigeria's Cross River State. The outcome showed that fuel subsidies had an impact on the availability of vital services, including healthcare and education. The study suggested that the government should provide food palliatives, especially to low-income earners; increase social investment programs; educate its citizens on the essence of fuel subsidy removal; encourage local refining; and invest in renewable and alternative energy.

In the context of geopolitical concerns and variations in the energy market, Oyadeyi, Ukoli, Chandiramani, Rosas, and Luo (2024) investigated how growing living expenses have impacted household purchasing power in the Nigerian economy. It illustrated the reasons behind the circumstances, their effects, and the consequences for the most vulnerable and impoverished families. Inflation and the already low quality of living might worsen if the cost-of-living challenge is not adequately addressed. The report recommended investing in essential infrastructure to reduce manufacturing costs and implementing fiscal policy that promotes price stability.

Nithya and Kann (2024) investigated the effects of rising gasoline costs on customers who use vehicles using a questionnaire survey. According to the report, gasoline costs have a wide range of effects on people's everyday lives and financial security. Customers may change their behavior to lessen the cost effect of increasing gasoline prices. Reducing pointless travel, carpooling, using public transit, or converting to more fuel-efficient cars are some examples of how to do this. Transportation developments and consumer

demand patterns may be greatly impacted by these shifts throughout time. It recommends that the government mitigate the rise in fuel prices by using policy measures such as reducing fuel tax, offering subsidies, or implementing price control.

Kabiya and Mengsteab (2023), using a questionnaire, studied the impact of high fuel pricing on the socio-economic well-being of the rural community in Lilongwe. The findings of the study showed that high fuel prices have an effect on the larger share of households, which changes the price of goods, affects their daily life and business production, and causes a reduction in demand for other goods. It further shows that there was a significant correlation between high fuel pricing and rural well-being. Therefore, the lives of the people get affected socially and economically when there is unstable availability of fuel and high pricing because they affect business, travel, and high prices of basic food. It recommended that government and other non-government bodies look into the issue of adequate availability of fuel through lowering taxes on petrol prices.

Pelin and Mübariz (2023) investigated how fluctuations in oil prices affected Turkey's inflation and production growth using the OLS model. The outcome showed that both inflation and economic activity are statistically significantly impacted by oil prices. It also shows that a rise in oil prices significantly and favorably affects inflation. The government should tighten its fiscal policy measures since taxes are one of the main causes of gasoline costs in Turkey and domestic prices only react to increases in oil prices.

Harnida (2022) investigated the issues facing the Indonesian economy and the rise in gasoline costs using a quantitative approach. It was found that the public and corporate players in Indonesia are facing several issues as a result of the rise in gasoline costs. The price of necessities, the cost of manufacturing products and services, the rise in unemployment, and inflation, which lowers real income and household spending, all demonstrate this. Compensation programs, including direct cash assistance and wage subsidy assistance, were issued as a result. It was recommended that the government give careful thought to the intended recipients of the aid.

Bari and Adali (2020) investigated how changes in domestic crude oil prices and automatic taxes affected consumer inflation in Turkey. The outcome demonstrated that, in the near term, both oil prices had an uneven impact on consumer prices. Nevertheless, the impact of the drop in oil prices is less than that of the rise. Long-run effects are symmetrical, and the inflationary impact of gasoline prices is stronger than that of oil prices. It was proposed that lowering the overall savings deficit (current account deficit) and raising foreign currency reserves would require a stable exchange rate.

Olatunbosun (2019) looked at how changes in crude oil prices affected Nigerian tertiary education survivability. The research found that budget allocation for postsecondary education in Nigeria is significantly correlated with fluctuations in crude oil prices and that these movements are a key factor in determining the survival of tertiary education in Nigeria. It suggests extending the strategy that allows higher education to survive by allocating education tax funds from the income of registered petroleum firms in order to create an alumni tax fund.

Meyer (2018) investigated how gasoline price fluctuations affected South Africa's inflation and economic growth. Price shocks and their influence on local economies should be carefully considered, since increasing gasoline costs have an effect on both monetary and fiscal policy. To lessen reliance and any future price shocks, fuel-importing nations should diversify their energy sector and look into other energy sources.

Ocheni (2015) investigated how rising gasoline prices affected Nigeria's economy. Without making a case for or against the elimination of subsidies, it was determined based on its results that the financial consequences are detrimental. It suggests that the government maintain gasoline subsidies while building the three planned refineries as quickly as possible. Additionally, they should work hard to revitalize the railroads, and as soon as these new refineries are put into service, the gasoline subsidy should be eliminated.

Arinze (2011) examined the effect of oil prices on the Nigerian economy using basic regression analysis. According to the report, the inflation rate rises in tandem with fuel prices. It was recommended that additional alternative supplies be used to diversify the economy and that petroleum product delivery routes be closely watched to prevent shortages or disruptions.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

While some studies have explored the impact of fuel price increases on specific sectors of the economy, limited research has focused on the multifarious impact of these fluctuations on students' cost of living. Existing literature often lacks a subtle understanding of the different experiences of learners across various socioeconomic backgrounds, geographical locations, and academic contexts. Furthermore, research on the long-term effects of rising fuel prices on students' academic trajectories, mental health, and future career prospects remains limited. This study intends to tackle these critical knowledge gaps by conducting in-depth research on the relationship between petrol price increases and the cost of living for students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. By examining the specific difficulties encountered by students, identifying effective coping mechanisms, and assessing whether the government and university management have adopted measures to reduce these challenges, this research will add to a deeper understanding of this issue and inform the development of evidence-based solutions.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey design. This study was carried out at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The university has 14 faculties and 57 departments. The population of the study consists of about 25,000 undergraduate

students living on the Nnamdi Azikiwe University campus, Awka, for the 2024/2025 academic session (Source: Academic Planning Unit, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 2025). The sample size for the study comprised 250 undergraduate students residing on campus at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Using the stratified technique, 5 strata were established, which comprised five hostels on campus, namely, University Boys' Hostel, University Girls' Hostel, Emelda Hostel, St. Theresa Hostel, and Bus-Stand Lodges. Fifty students each were drawn from each stratum using the simple random sampling technique, resulting in a total sample of 250 students. A well-designed questionnaire comprising Sections A, B, C, D, E, and F was used for data collection. Section A sought to collect respondents' demographic information, while the remaining sections contain information required to answer the researcher's questions, which the respondents are requested to tick on a modified four-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was made up of 32 items in six clusters. The response categories indicate the level of agreement and disagreement. The response categories were written thus: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). The instrument was administered to the respondents through the Direct Delivery Method (DDM). The researcher and the research assistants visited the respondents in their various hostels and lodges to fill out the questionnaire face-to-face, and they were given time to fill it out. After completion, they were collected by the researcher and the research assistants at the spot. The direct delivery method helped the researcher and the research assistants to recover all the questionnaires without recording any loss. Data collected in the conduct of this study were examined using descriptive statistics (frequency tables, percentage, mean, and bar chart) and the Pearson correlation coefficient.

3.1 Validation and Reliability of Instrument

In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, two copies of the questionnaire developed for the study and the researcher's questions were given to two experts of the Department of Economics, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The experts were specifically requested to assess the clarity of language, logical sequence of the items, adequacy and appropriateness of the instructions given to respondents, and adequacy of the items in generating data required to answer the research questions. The corrections and suggestions of the experts were used in modifying the final copy of the instrument.

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was carried out. The instrument was first administered to 10 off-campus students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, who were not part of the sample study. They did not have any problem responding to the items on the questionnaire. Data obtained from the trial testing were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha through SPSS, which yielded a coefficient of 0.871, making the instrument acceptable and reliable, thus fitting for the study.

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic Presentation of Respondents

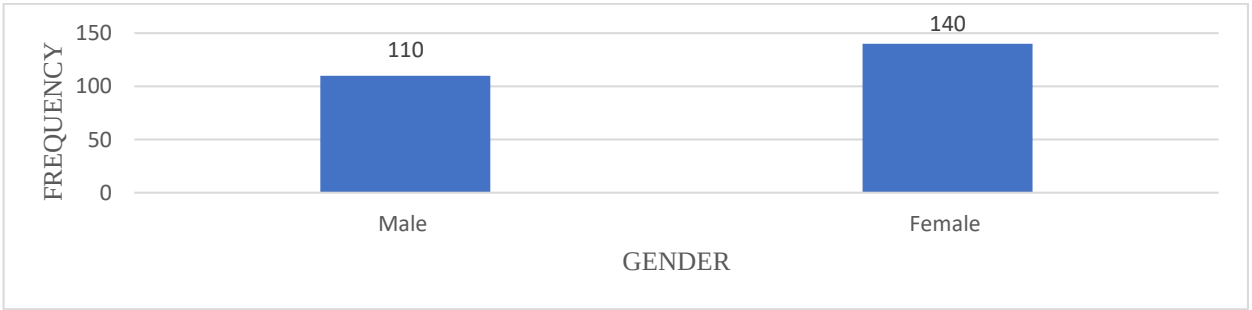
Table 4.1 Age of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
14-17	25	10	10	10
18-21	160	64	64	74
22-25	60	24	24	98
26-29	5	2	2	100
Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

This table shows the age distribution or bracket of the respondents. Individuals within the age bracket of 14-17 are 25 in number, representing 10% of the sample population; people within the age bracket of 18-21 are 160 in number, that is, 64% of the sample population; people within the age bracket of 22-25 are 60 in number, that is, 24% of the sample population, while people within the age bracket of 26-29 are 5 in number, that is, 2% of the sample population. This shows that people within the age bracket of 18-21 were the most likely age of students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, followed by the 22-25 age bracket.

Fig. 4.1 Bar chart representation of respondents' gender



Source: Field survey 2025

The figure above shows the gender distribution of the respondents. Out of 250 people sampled, 110 (44%) were male, while the females were 140 (56%) of the sample population. This implies that the female gender dominates the male gender in the case of this study.

Table 4.2 Academic Level of Respondents

Academic Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Graduate	5	2	2	2
Undergraduate	235	94	94	96
Postgraduate	10	4	4	100
Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field Survey 2025

The table above shows the academic level distribution of the respondents. Out of 250 students sampled, 5 students were graduates (2%), 235 students were undergraduates (94%), and 10 students were postgraduates (4%). This result shows that the undergraduate students dominate in the course of this study, with a total percentage of 94% of the sampled population.

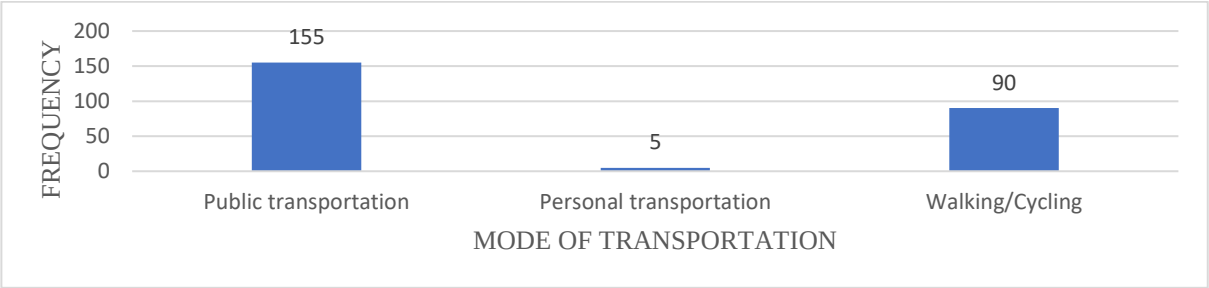
Table 4.3. Area of Accommodation of Respondents

Area of Accommodation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
On-campus	230	92	92	92
Off-campus	20	8	8	100
Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the area of accommodation distribution; the number of students who live on-campus is 230 (92%) of the sample population, while 20 students live off-campus (8%). This result shows that the respondents who live on-campus dominate the off-campus students; the study focuses mainly on on-campus students.

Fig. 4.2 Bar chart representation of respondents Mode of Transportation



Source: Field Survey, 2025

The figure above exhibits the mode of transportation distribution: 155 students made use of public transportation (62%), 5 students used personal transportation (2%), and 90 students walked or cycled to school (36%). Most of the respondents made use of public transportation (62%).

Table 4.4 To what extent do you agree that fuel prices have increased?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	50	20	20	20
	Neutral	46	18.4	18.4	38.4
	Agree	74	29.6	29.6	68
	Strongly agree	80	32	32	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the sample population of 250 respondents, of which 50 respondents disagreed (20%), 46 respondents were neutral (18.4%), 74 respondents agreed, while 80 respondents strongly agreed that fuel prices have increased (32%). Most of the respondents strongly agreed that fuel prices have increased (32%).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1

The Pearson correlation coefficient was computed using the formula: The Pearson correlation coefficient shows the linear relationship between two variables. It is a number between -1 and 1 that measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables.

$$r = \frac{\sum (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y_i - \bar{y})^2}}$$

r = correlation coefficient
x_i = values of the x-variable in a sample
$\bar{x}$ = mean of the values of the x-variable
y_i = values of the y variable in a sample
$\bar{y}$ = mean of the values of the y variable

4.1.1 Test of Research Hypothesis

Decision Rule: Reject H_0 if the probability value is less than the critical value (i.e., if p-value < α). Where = 0.05.

4.1.2 Hypotheses One

H_0: There is no linear relationship between the increase in fuel price and students' purchasing power (proxied by inflation) in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

H_1: There is a linear relationship between the increase in fuel price and students' purchasing power (proxied by inflation) in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
FPI	3.736	1.11322	250
Inflation rate	3.77714	0.84499	250

Table 4.5. 1. Correlation

		FPI	Inflation rate
FPI	Pearson Correlation	1	.356**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	250	250
Inflation rate	Pearson Correlation	.356**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	250	250

The tables above show the descriptive statistics of fuel price increases and the purchasing power of students. The average fuel price increase is approximately 3.74 units, while the inflation rate is 3.78 units, indicating a high response leaning towards "agree" that fuel prices are increasing and inflation is impacting purchasing power of students. Table 4.3.1b, shows the correlation of fuel price increase and inflation's impact on the purchasing power of students, since r=0.356 (correlation coefficient), which indicates a medium positive relationship. For the test of significance, the p-value = .000 which is less than the critical value at 0.05, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. we can conclude that there is a high perception from the 250 respondents that fuel price increases affect the purchasing power of students in NAU. While a medium positive correlation implies that as fuel price increases, the inflation rate tends to also increase moderately which reduces the purchasing power of students.

4.5.2 Hypothesis Two

H_0: There is no linear relationship between the increase in fuel price and housing cost of students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

H_1: There is a linear relationship between the increase in fuel price and housing cost of students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

Table 4.5. 2.1 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
FPI	3.736	1.11322	250
Housing cost	3.09333	0.97042	250

e		FPI	Housing cost
FPI	Pearson Correlation	1	.258**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	250	250
Housing cost	Pearson Correlation	.258**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	250	250

Table 4.5..2.1 shows the descriptive statistics of fuel price increase and the housing cost of students. The average fuel price increase has a high mean of 3.74, while housing cost has a moderate mean of 3.09, which indicates that fuel price increases are more pronounced than the housing cost of students. Table 4.1.3.1 shows the correlation between fuel price increase and housing cost of students, since r = 0.258 (correlation coefficient), which indicates a low positive relationship. For the test of significance, the p-value = .000 which is less than the critical value at 0.05, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. We can conclude that there was a low perception from the 250 respondents that fuel price increases affect the housing cost of students in NAU. A low positive correlation implies that an increase in fuel prices does not strongly influence changes in the housing cost of students.

4.6.1 Hypothesis Three

H_o: There is no linear relationship between the increase in fuel price and transportation cost of students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

H_1: There is a linear relationship between the increase in fuel price and transportation cost of students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

Table 4.6.1.2: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
FPI	3.736	1.11322	250
Transportation cost	4.095	0.74292	250

		FPI	Transportation cost
FPI	Pearson Correlation	1	.508**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	250	250
Transportation cost	Pearson Correlation	.508**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	250	250

Source: SPSS Software version 25

The tables above show the descriptive statistics of fuel price increase and the transportation cost of students. Fuel price increase has a high mean of 3.74 while transportation cost has an even higher mean of 4.10 which indicates that transportation cost is rising more rapidly than fuel price increases. Table 4.4.1, shows the correlation of fuel price increase and transportation cost of students, since r = 0.508 (correlation coefficient), which indicates a high positive relationship. For the test of significance, the p-value = .000 which is less than the critical value at 0.05, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. We can conclude that a highly positive correlation implies that as fuel price increases, the transportation cost of students also increases.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2: To find out what the university and government have done in order to mitigate the effect of the increase in fuel price on students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University

Table 4.7.1 The government has provided financial support or subsidies to support transportation costs.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	70	28	28	28
	Disagree	85	34	34	62
	Neutral	35	14	14	76

	Agree	35	14	14	90
	Strongly agree	25	10	10	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 70 respondents strongly disagreed (28%), 85 respondents disagreed (34%), 35 respondents were neutral (14%), and 35 respondents agreed (14%), while 25 respondents strongly agreed (10%) that the government had provided financial support or subsidies to support transportation costs. Most of the respondents disagreed that the government had provided financial support or subsidies to support transportation costs.

Table 4.7.2 The government has implemented policies to reduce the effect of the rising cost of fuel.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	70	28	28	28
	Disagree	75	30	30	58
	Neutral	40	16	16	74
	Agree	40	16	16	90
	Strongly agree	25	10	10	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 70 respondents strongly disagreed (28%), 75 respondents disagreed (30%), 40 respondents were neutral (16%), and 40 respondents agreed (16%), while 25 respondents strongly agreed (10%) that the government had implemented policies to reduce the effect of the rising cost of fuel. The majority of the respondents disagreed that the government had implemented policies to reduce the effect of the rising cost of fuel.

Table 4.7.3 My school has provided some stipends for transportation due to the increase in fuel costs.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	80	32	32	32
	Disagree	60	24	24	56
	Neutral	70	28	28	84
	Agree	35	14	14	98
	Strongly agree	5	2	2	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Researchers Field Survey, 2025

The table above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 80 respondents strongly disagreed (32%), 60 respondents disagreed (24%), 70 respondents were neutral (28%), and 35 respondents agreed (14%), and 5 respondents strongly agreed (2%), while most respondents strongly disagreed that the management had not provided stipends for students' transportation to campus.

Table 4.7.4 The management has provided free public transportation to help students.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	105	42	42	42
	Disagree	75	30	30	72
	Neutral	35	14	14	86
	Agree	35	14	14	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 105 respondents strongly disagreed (42%), 75 respondents disagreed (30%), 35 respondents were neutral (14%), and 35 respondents agreed (14%) that the management had provided free public transportation to help students. Most of the respondents strongly disagreed that the management had provided free public transportation to help students.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3: COPING STRATEGIES BY THE STUDENTS

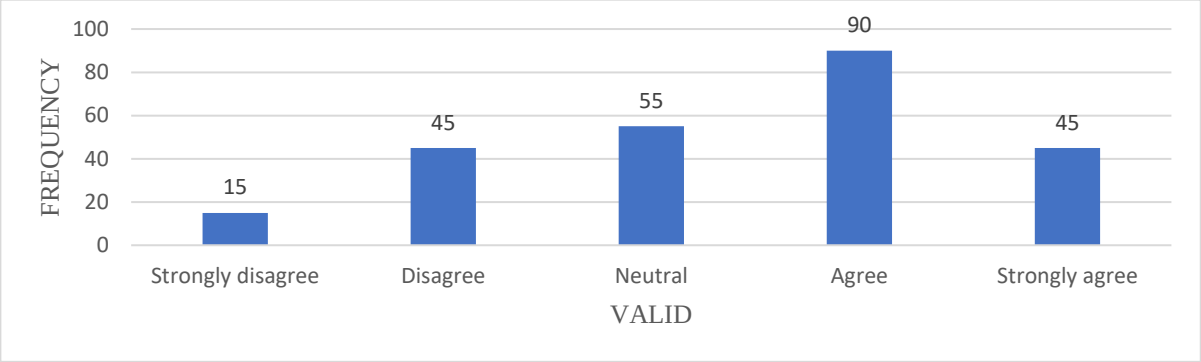
Table 4.8.1: I have reduced my food expenses due to increased fuel costs.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	10	4	4	4
	Disagree	65	26	26	30
	Neutral	55	22	22	52
	Agree	40	16	16	68
	Strongly agree	80	32	32	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows that 10 respondents strongly disagreed (4%), 65 respondents disagreed (26%), 55 respondents were neutral (22%), 40 respondents agreed (16%), and 80 respondents strongly agreed (32%) that they have reduced their food expenses due to increased fuel costs. Most of the respondents strongly agreed that they have reduced their food expenses due to increased fuel costs.

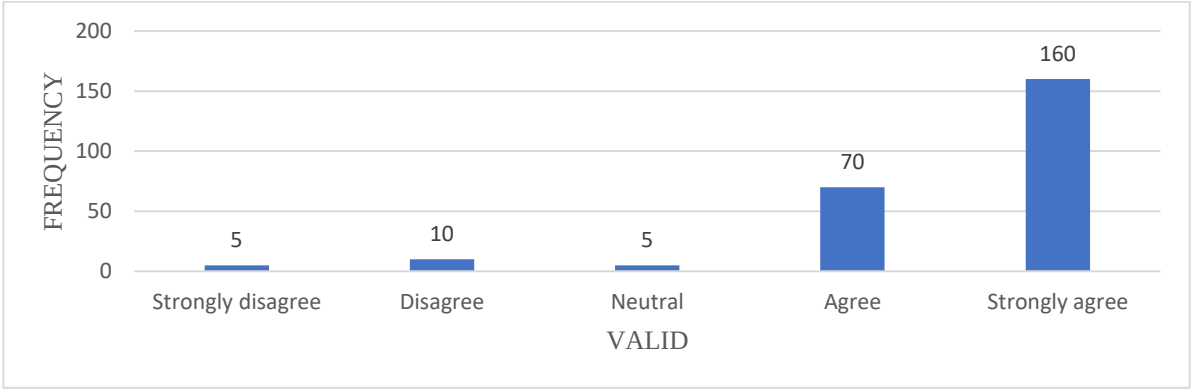
Fig. 4.3: Bar chart representation of how I have had to adjust my budget to accommodate increased housing costs due to fuel price increases.



Source: Field survey 2025

The figure above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 15 strongly disagreed (6%), 45 disagreed (18%), 55 were neutral (22%), 90 agreed (36%), and 45 strongly agreed (18%) that they have had to adjust their budget to accommodate increased housing costs due to fuel price increases. Most of the respondents agreed that they have had to adjust the budget to accommodate increased housing costs due to fuel price increases.

Fig. 4.4. Bar chart Representation of how I have considered alternative modes of transportation



Source: Field survey 2025

The figure above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 5 respondents strongly disagreed (2%), 10 students disagreed (4%), 5 respondents were neutral (2%), 70 agreed (28%), and 160 respondents strongly agreed (64%) that they have considered alternative modes of transportation. Most of the respondents strongly agreed that they have alternative modes of transportation.

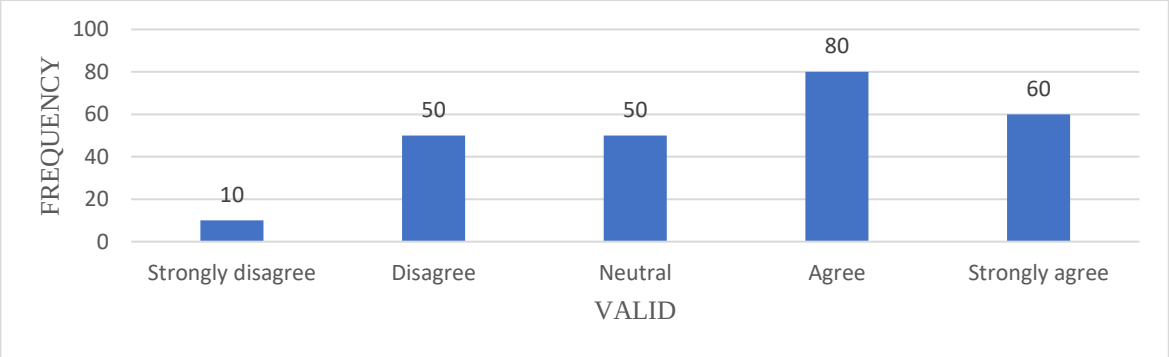
Table 4.8.2: I have had to limit my social activities due to increased transportation costs.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	10	4	4	4
	Disagree	30	12	12	16
	Neutral	40	16	16	32
	Agree	100	40	40	72
	Strongly agree	70	28	28	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the sampled population for 250 respondents, of which 10 respondents strongly disagreed (4%), 30 respondents disagreed (12%), 40 respondents were neutral (16%), 100 respondents agreed (40%), and 70 respondents strongly agreed (28%) that they have had to limit their social activities due to increased transportation costs. Most respondents agreed that they have had to limit their social activities due to increased transportation costs.

Fig. 4.5. Bar chart Representation of how I have changed my daily routine due to the cost of transportation



Source: Field survey 2025

The figure above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 10 respondents strongly disagreed (4%), 50 respondents disagreed (20%), 50 respondents were neutral (20%), 80 respondents agreed (32%), and 60 respondents strongly agreed (24%) that they have changed their daily routine due to the cost of transportation. Most of the respondents agreed that they have changed their daily routine due to the cost of transportation.

Table 4.8. 3. I reduce the number of times I attend lectures in order to cope with the high cost of transportation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	35	14	14	14
	Disagree	110	44	44	58
	Neutral	30	12	12	70
	Agree	45	18	18	88
	Strongly agree	30	12	12	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 35 respondents strongly disagreed (14%), 110 respondents disagreed (44%), 30 respondents were neutral (12%), 45 respondents agreed (18%), and 30 respondents strongly agreed (12%) that they reduced the number of times they attended lectures in order to cope with the high cost of transportation. Most of

the respondents disagreed that they reduced the number of times they attend lectures in order to cope with the high cost of transportation.

Table 4.8.4. I attend more online lectures in order to cope with the high cost of transportation.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	35	14	14	14
	Disagree	95	38	38	52
	Neutral	50	20	20	72
	Agree	45	18	18	90
	Strongly agree	25	10	10	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 35 respondents strongly disagreed (14%), 95 respondents disagreed (38%), 50 respondents were neutral (20%), 45 respondents agreed (18%), and 25 respondents strongly agreed (10%) that they attend more online lectures in order to cope with the high cost of transportation. Most of the respondents disagreed that they attend more online lectures in order to cope with the high cost of transportation.

Table 4.8.5. I have started doing part-time work in order to cope with the high cost of living

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	25	10	10	10
	Disagree	60	24	24	34
	Neutral	65	26	26	60
	Agree	65	26	26	86
	Strongly agree	35	14	14	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 25 respondents strongly disagreed (10%), 60 respondents disagreed (24%), 65 respondents were neutral (26%), 65 respondents agreed (26%), and 35 respondents strongly agreed (14%) that they have started doing part-time work in order to cope with the high cost of living. Most of the respondents were indifferent, as they were split between neutrality and agreement that they had started engaging in part-time work to cope with the high cost of living.

Table 4.8.6. I have changed my feeding habits due to the effect of the increase in fuel prices.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	20	8	8	8
	Disagree	35	14	14	22
	Neutral	65	26	26	48
	Agree	75	30	30	78
	Strongly agree	55	22	22	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 20 respondents strongly disagreed (8%), 35 respondents disagreed (14%), 65 respondents were neutral (26%), 75 respondents agreed (30%), and 55 respondents strongly agreed (22%) that they have changed their feeding habits due to the effect of the increase in fuel prices. Most of the respondents agreed that they have changed their feeding habits due to the effect of the increase in fuel prices.

Table 4.8.7. I borrow money from friends/family to support myself.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	30	12	12	12
	Disagree	60	24	24	36
	Neutral	50	20	20	56
	Agree	65	26	26	82
	Strongly agree	45	18	18	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field survey 2025

The table above shows the sampled population of 250 respondents, of which 30 respondents strongly disagreed (12%), 60 respondents disagreed (24%), 50 respondents were neutral (20%), 65 respondents agreed (26%), and 45 respondents strongly agreed (18%) that they have borrowed from friends/family to support themselves. Most of the respondents agreed that they have borrowed money from friends/family to support themselves.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Pearson correlation shows that there was a significant relationship between fuel price increases and the purchasing power of students (with inflation rate as a proxy), housing costs, and transportation costs. The analysis therefore shows that fuel price increases had more influence on the transportation costs of the students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (NAU). This study also found that the government and university management have not done anything to reduce the effect of fuel price increases on the living costs of students in NAU. The study also found that the strategies used by the students to cope include reducing food expenses, adjusting their budgets, using different modes of transportation such as trekking; limiting social activities, changing daily routines, changing feeding habits, and borrowing from friends and families. This situation requires critical attention from the government to implement palliative measures and long-term economic reforms that can cushion the effect of fuel price hikes on this vulnerable demographic. Based on the findings, this study makes the following recommendations:

The government, in collaboration with the university, should roll out and maintain a fleet of buses to transport students at a subsidized rate or for free; this would directly reduce the burden of daily commuting. The government could incentivize shared ride services and carpooling among students with dedicated campus-based programs, which would help distribute fuel costs. Universities should operate affordable campus cafeterias and food programs to ensure students have access to nutritious meals at a fraction of the market price. University management should ensure that on-campus hostel fees remain affordable and that landlords of lodge accommodations do not arbitrarily hike rents; rent control policies for student housing areas could be considered.

Economic reforms involving structural changes directed at addressing the fundamental issues would proffer a sustainable solution. Prioritizing and fast-tracking the completion of existing refineries and incentivizing private sector investment in modular refineries are important factors in reducing Nigeria's reliance on imported refined petroleum products. Local refining would stabilize fuel prices, reduce foreign exchange demand for imports, and create jobs.

Implementing sound fiscal and monetary policies is necessary to control inflation. This includes fiscal discipline, reducing the budget deficit, and empowering the central bank to maintain price stability. By controlling the overall inflation rate, the government can mitigate the ripple effect of fuel price increases on the prices of goods and services, which appropriately affects students' purchasing power.

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