

## Press Reportage of 2012 Fuel Subsidy Removal Crisis in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Increases in the pump price of petroleum have been incessant in Nigeria. It first took off at 15.3 Kobo per litre in 1978, when General Olusegun Obasanjo was Military Head of State, to 70 Naira in 2007 when same Obasanjo presided over Nigeria's civil rule. Incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan reviewed it upward to 141 Naira in 2012, thus sparking nationwide protests that reversed the price per litre of petrol to its current price of 97 Naira. A further increase appears imminent, as the central government still intends to ensure a total removal of petroleum subsidy. This study is an addition to other studies on mass media's power to influence and reinforce the relative importance of issues in the psyche of news audiences. With the fuel subsidy crisis of 2012 as its focus, the study examined the reportage of the issue by *The Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers, in terms of their frequency of reports, prominence given, direction of editorial contents, and the tone used in reporting the issue. Inference drawn from the findings is that there was an interaction between the priority accorded the fuel subsidy removal crisis by the press (media agenda), and the importance attached to it by the public through their reaction (public agenda), as well as subsequent government policy reversal (policy agenda).

**Keywords:** Price variation, crisis, media agenda, public agenda, and policy agenda

### 1. Introduction

Fuel-related crises have become common in Nigeria, where large crude oil deposits abound, which is an exporter of the commodity. It is pathetic to observe that no other member of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) or a country that does not produce oil shares similar ugly experience with Nigeria (Badmus, 2009:25). This undesirable situation led to the introduction of the controversial issue of subsidy in the downstream oil sector, which nearly tore Nigeria into pieces, still threatens its peace and democratic structure. Economically, subsidy exists when government assists consumers of a given commodity to pay less than the prevailing market price of the commodity. In respect of fuel subsidy, it means that consumers would pay less than the price per litre of petroleum product. On the other hand, fuel subsidy refers to the difference between the actual market price per litre of petroleum products and what the final consumers pay for it. Today, the difference, which is borne by the government, is due to some eight 'import-induced costs'. These costs, according to Afonne (2011:18) are responsible for the high prices of petroleum products in Nigeria.

Since petroleum industry became the dominant sector in Nigeria, the volume of agricultural exports have declined sharply, with production of agro-allied products faced with a drastic decline. Consequently, agricultural import has increased dramatically. In the light of this background, the paper aims at examining the impact of fuel subsidy removal on output in Nigeria

### 2. Problem Statement

Fuel (or petrol) is central to the economic pursuits of Nigerians, whose sustenance daily bread is tied to this by-product of Nigeria's rich crude oil deposits, its major foreign exchange earner. Of importance is the crisis that ensued as an aftermath of government's pronouncement of the removal of fuel subsidy in January 2012, especially as regards the newspaper coverage of the issue, leaves a question mark, the solution to which this study seeks. Thus, the study is an examination of press reportage of 2012 fuel subsidy removal-triggered crisis in Nigeria

#### 2.1 Research Objectives

The research effort aims to achieve the following objectives:

To examine the frequency of reportage of 2012 fuel subsidy removal crisis by the press

To determine the prominence given the issue by the newspapers

To ascertain the direction of editorial contents of the *Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers

To fathom if there is any inference between the newspapers' reportage and public's perception of the crisis

#### 2.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What was the frequency of reportage of the fuel subsidy removal crisis by Nigerian newspapers?

RQ2. What was the level of prominence given to the crisis by the press?

RQ3. What was the direction of the newspapers' contents on the crisis?

RQ4. What was the kind of tone used in the reportage of fuel subsidy removal crisis by the press?

RQ5. What inference can be drawn from a relationship between press reportage of the issue and public perception of it?

### 3. Literature Review

The history of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria is rather a long one, particularly with its negative effects. Fuel subsidy removal dates back to 1978, when the then military government, General Olusegun Obasanjo reviewed the pump price of fuel from 8.4 kobo to 15.37 kobo. The concern was for government to generate enough money to run the administration, particularly when it was preparing for the 1979 democratic elections and to cater to the social needs of Nigerians.

In January 1982, the civilian regime of Alhaji Shehu Shagari also raised the pump price to 20 kobo from 15.37 kobo. Money realized from the fuel increase was used by members of the regime to buy properties in major capitals of European nations (USA, UK, Spain, France and others), as against using same to put in place social services that Nigerians badly needed then. The inept leadership of the then NPN national government and the corruption that bedeviled the administration led to its Overthrown. Then the military junta of General Ibrahim Babangida increased the pump price of fuel to 39.50 kobo on March 31, 1986. This regime was notorious for numerous pump price increases.

On April 10, 1988, the Babangida-led regime increased it to 42 kobo from 39.50 kobo per litre, and then again to 60 kobo for private cars on January 1, 1989. These increases came at the time the regime chose to adopt a homegrown Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as against external borrowing. His decision sparked-off massive protests by Nigerians., for whom the economic down turn and fuel price increases made life unbearable. Nigerians reacted angrily. Again, on March 6, 1991, the Babangida administration raised the pump price from 60 kobo to 70kobo. Not too long, the Nigerian nation was subjected to another round of fuel increase, when in November 8, 1993, the pump price was raised to N5.00. Greeted with mass protests across Nigeria, the price was reduced to N2.50 on November 22, 1993. A year later, on October 2nd, 1994, it was again raised to N15.00 only to be reduced two days later to N11.00 by the Gen. Sanni Abacha's regime. The reduction had considered the mass protests and the need to win the support of Nigerians. On December 20, 1998, the pump went up to N25, but was cut down to N20 on January 6, 1999, after a month. This was during Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar's brief transitional reign as a Nigeria's military leader.

Like others before him, he did not spare Nigerians the burden of fuel price increases. The decision triggered protests in which Nigerians, the organized labour and the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) pressed for a reversal. It is necessary at this point to place on record that it was only both the military junta of Buhari/Idiagbon and Umaru Shehu Yar'Adua that did not review the pump of fuel. However, this may have been due to the brief reign of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime and the ill health of Yar'Adua respectively.

Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo's second coming as a civilian president did not help matters. In his eight-year reign, he increased the price per litre of fuel, beginning June 1, 2000, when he jerked up the price per litre to N30, only to be reduced to N25, having been rejected in massive protests by organized labour, civil society organizations and the ordinary Nigerians. Five days later, on June 13, 2000, the pump price witnessed an adjustment to N22. On January 1, 2002, Obasanjo struck again raising the price of the commodity from N22 to N26, and then to N40 in the year that followed (June 23, 2003). In June 2007, it rose again to N70, which Yar'Adua cut down to N65 when he assumed office in May 2007.

It had remained so, until President Goodluck Jonathan opted for an outright removal of fuel subsidy. Interestingly, an erstwhile President of the Nigeria Labour Congress and current governor of Nigeria's Edo State, Comrade Adams Oshiomole, who previously had championed protests against fuel subsidy removal, also called for complete removal of it. The issue was that, while nationwide consultations and discussions on fuel subsidy removal were still on, the Petroleum Product Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) on January 1, 2012, announced the outright removal of fuel subsidy, leaving petrol to sell at a record N141 per litre. The decision angered did not go down well with the public; it led to massive strike actions and protests by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC), PENGASSAN, Civil Society Organizations, and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) among other advocacy bodies. The protests nearly transformed into a "Nigerian Spring" that could have wrecked grave consequences; so vehement were the demonstrations that government rescinded the option of outright removal, agreed to a partial removal, which brought and reduced the pump price to N97 thus, it remains so until date.

(3)

Below is a table presenting a clearer picture of the different pump prices orchestrated by the different administrations in Nigeria from 1978 to January 2012.

**Table 1: Data on Petroleum Prices/Adjustments in Nigeria (1978-2012)**

S/N	Date	Administration	Price (k)	Percent (%)
1	1978	Gen Olusegun Obasanjo (as military ruler)	15.3	
2	1982	Gen Shehu Shagari	20	
3	1990	Gen Ibrahim Babangida	60	300
4	1992	Gen Ibrahim Babangida	70	17
5	1992	Gen Ibrahim Babangida	3.25	364
6	1993	Gen Ibrahim Babangida		54
7	1994	Chief Ernest Shonekan	5	120
8	1994/98	Gen Sani Abacha	11	-
9	2000	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	20	82
10	2000	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	22	10
11	2001	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	26	18
12	2003	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	40	54
13	2004	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	45	13
14	2007	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (as civilian ruler)	70	56
15	2007	Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua	65	0.07
16	2012 till date	Dr Ebele Goodluck Jonathan	141	117

**Source:** Communiqué by South-South Leaders 2012 (as cited in Atoyebi K. et al., 2012)

Data in Table 1 show that Nigerians have witnessed fuel increases since 1978, when General Olusegun Obasanjo's regime raised the pump price of gasoline from 8.4 kobo to 15.37 kobo. It is pertinent to note that General Babangida and President Obasanjo are reputed to have made the most increases within each of their eight years in office.

**Table 2: Petrol Prices in Selected Oil Producing Countries as at 2012**

S/N	Countries	Pump Price in US Dollar
1	Algeria	0.41
2	Bahrain	0.27
3	Brunei	0.39
4	Egypt	0.31
5	Iraq	0.38
6	Kuwait	0.22
7	Libya	0.17
8	Nigeria	0.87
9	Oman	0.31
10	Qatar	0.22
11	Saudi Arabia	0.16
12	UAE	0.49
13	Venezuela	0.023

**Source:** Compiled by Germans Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and Published by Wikipedia, 2012 (cited in Atoyebi K. et al., 2012)

While it may be difficult to get a comprehensive list of countries with their fuel pump prices, a few instances, as captured by the German Technical Cooperation, are analyzed here (See Table 2). The Table clearly shows that fuel is more expensive in oil-rich Nigeria. The argument here is that what Nigerians pay for petrol is too high – they 'own the resource, but the corrupt members of the political elite think otherwise.

The will to effect far-reaching changes in Nigeria's petroleum sector has been lacking among the country's ruling elite, just as the appalling lack of enterprise manifested in the inertness that crippled the building of power stations for the future. This attitude also manifested even more cynically in the deliberate refusal to build refineries or maintain existing ones. Early last December, President Jonathan noted that the nation could face the danger of youth revolt, unless government provides jobs for the teeming unemployed youths roaming the streets of the country. He promised that his government was poised with the provision of 50, 000 jobs in the New Year.

How much he would be able to do this is another matter, as Nigerians had seen government after government make promises in the past, which they never kept.

President Jonathan has repeatedly said that subsidy withdrawal is necessary to safeguard Nigeria's future. He said the total deregulation of the downstream sector would open up the oil industry for foreign investments that will lead to massive jobs creation and development. For instance, the government's Subsidy Reinvestment and Employment Programme (SURE-P), under which it listed among other projects, the construction or completion of eight major roads and two bridges, provision of health care for three million pregnant women, six railway projects, youth employment, mass transit, 19 irrigation projects, rural and urban water supply (Ofikhenn, 2011:4). In her own version, the Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, claimed that the removal of fuel subsidy was to save the country from bankruptcy because fund for subsidy on petroleum products was too huge. According to her, in a couple of years, Nigeria would be short of funds, should subsidies continue.

Okonjo-Iweala supported her claim by saying that the subsidy fund was going into the wrong hands, made up of some cartels in the oil business, and who are the ones really enjoying the subsidy. The question is, are these cartels above the government that government turns the hammer on the masses instead of facing the identified cartels? While many Nigerians were not happy with the developments, some supported, while a third group sought a balance.

Gen. Buhari has openly distanced himself from supporting such plans. Rather, he reveals that what goes into the subsidy policy is the cost of corruption in the opaque business of oil importation. Governor Muazu Babangida Aliyu of Niger State, rolling behind the federal government claimed that the policy was the best measure to regenerate the country's ailing petroleum sector. Aliyu was of the opinion that if fuel subsidy stopped, measures must be in place at local, state, and federal government levels to cushion likely effects, adding that not all of Nigeria's refineries were functional. He agreed that there was a cabal in the country enjoying the subsidy payments by the federal government to the detriment of Nigerians. This cabal, he said, did not want local refineries to work.

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

Theories are particularly useful in helping us to predict the outcome of a research undertaken. This means that we can make predictions about the outcome of certain events (Anaeto et al., 2012). The predictive power of theories makes them relevant and applicable to social research especially. According to Amobi and Sunday (2012), in addition to the descriptive functions of theories, theories have explanatory and predictive powers. Consequently, theories like agenda-setting, gate keeping framing, priming and spiral of silence have relevance to this study, as they highlight the 'effective' role of the media in the 2012 subsidy removal crisis in Nigeria.

McCombs and Shaw, in describing a phenomenon long noticed and studied in the context of election campaigns coined the term 'agenda-setting' (Olorede, 2011). McQuail (2000), cited in Olorede (2011), states further that the evidence collected at that time, and since consists of data showing a correspondence between the order of importance given in the media to 'issues' and order of significance attached to the same issue by the public and politicians. Agenda-setting theory seems quite appropriate to help us understand the pervasive role of the media, especially in political communication systems (Olorede, 2013). In the theory's simplest and most direct version, then, the media agenda affects the public agenda, and the public agenda affects the policy agenda (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008).

The idea of framing stemmed from agenda-setting theorists, who viewed it as a natural way in which second-level agenda setting occurs (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). They state that media depictions frame events in ways that constraint how audiences can interpret these events. This, according to them, can happen by various textual features of the "story" such as headlines, audio-visual components, metaphors used, and the way in which the story is told, to name only a few of the ways framing functions.

Beyond agenda-setting is the media's power to prime, said Ogwezzy (2012), who studied factors influencing media output during April 2007 general elections in Nigeria. In the views of Baran and Davis (2009), priming is the idea that presentations in the media heighten the likelihood that people will develop similar thoughts about those things in the real world. Writing on aggressive cues, they said in terms of priming effect, media presentations of women as victims of violence heightens the likelihood that viewers, when confronted by real-life women, will have similar thoughts about them.

Also relevant in this discourse is the Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory. The authors' views are at par with Ogwezzy's (2012) who found that the spiral of silence as reinforcing media's power to prime. According to Folarin (2002), the theory describes the tendency for individuals and groups to suppress their private opinions, under pressure from fear of isolation. Noelle-Neumann (1979, 1980), as cited in Folarin (2002), concludes that, largely, it is the media which create opinion. Folarin writes further that a majority of the public tends to see issues and persons as media see them adding that because society rewards conformity and punishes deviance the fear of isolation constrains people to conform to shared judgments held by the mass media. Since media can set agenda that can become public agenda or policy agenda by reinforcing publics' dominant opinions,

their power to suppress certain opinions thus causes a spiral of silence. The propositions and assumptions of the theories, as explained above, justify their particular relevance and applicability to this study.

## 5. Method

Examination of the prominence given to the crisis resulting from the President's January 1, 2012 broadcast of Federal Government's removal of petroleum subsidy by the Nigerian newspapers was the focus of this study. The most suitable research method for this kind of study, according to Oloredo (2011), is content analysis.

Kerlinger (1973) defines content analysis as a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for measuring variables. Accordingly, the researchers used content analysis because it is systematic, quantifiable and relatively cheap (Berelson, 1952, cited in Oloredo 2011).

### 5.1 Procedure

Regular accessibility, circulation and popular readership were the criteria used to determine the eligibility of the national newspapers that made up the sampling frame for this study. Nine newspapers – The Nation, Vanguard, Daily Independent, The Champion, The Guardian, This Day, The Sun, The Punch, and National Mirror – formed the sampling frame, based on the eligibility criteria earlier stated. However, The Punch and Vanguard newspapers emerged through simple random sampling. A period of thirty-one days, January 1, 2012 to January 31, 2012 was chosen. We used sixty two (62) editions, thirty-one (31) each of the two selected newspapers. The rationale for this was because the subsidy removal crisis under study had a two-week high intensity period (January 1 – 15) and two-week low intensity period (January 16 – 31). The first two weeks were active crisis periods highlighting government's announcement of fuel subsidy removal, and the reaction to the announcement. The two weeks after showed a less active crisis period beginning from January 16, when the government reverted pump price from N141 to N97.

### 5.2 Content Categories and Variables

Straight news reports, editorials, opinions/columns, pictures/cartoons and letters to the editor were the five developed sets of observable categories, while frequency, prominence, direction of editorial contents, tone and inference were the variables measured. Using a similar method, Amobi and Sunday (2012) noted that state that number of reports about incident determines frequency, placement of the story in the newspaper determines prominence, while tone of language determines direction. We, however, measured direction and tone differently in this study. We measured direction in relation to whether reports were favourable, unfavourable or neutral; we measure tone in relation to whether the reports were harsh, soft or neutral. The extent of observable relationship between media agenda and public agenda determined inference. In other words, inference was in relation to whether media reportage of the crisis led to public perception of it as important.

## 6. Results

The five earlier stated research questions guide the presentation of the results of this study. The questions are as stated below:

### 6.1 RQ1. What was the frequency of reportage of subsidy removal crisis by Nigerian newspapers?

Research question one explores the frequency of reportage of the crisis resulting from the federal government's removal of fuel subsidy by The Punch and Vanguard newspapers, whose contents we examined in relation to the number of times they reported the issue. As shown in the table below, there was high frequency of reportage of the crisis by the two newspapers, as they reported 6,130 out of 8,944 overall editorial items, amounting to 68.5 per cent.

**Table3: Showing the frequency of reportage of fuel subsidy removal crisis by the Vanguard and the Punch newspapers**

Newspaper	All Editorial items	Editorial items on the Crisis	Percentage
Vanguard	4532	3012	49.1%
The Punch	4412	3118	50.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8944</b>	<b>6130</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Fieldwork survey (2013)

### The Nature of stories on the Crisis

Table 2 below shows the nature of stories on the crisis under study, ranging from straight news, editorial, opinion, pictures, to letters to the editor. Straight news recorded the highest contents of 1,020, while letters to the editor had the lowest with 288 items.



**Table 4: Showing the nature of stories on the crisis**

Nature of Story	Vanguard	The Punch	Total
Straight News	1002 (33.3%)	1020 (33%)	2022 (33%)
Editorial	411 (13.6%)	486 (15.6%)	897 (14.6%)
Opinions/Columns	314 (10.4%)	323 (10.4%)	637 (10.4%)
Pictures	922 (30.6%)	1001 (32%)	1923 (31.4%)
Letters to the Editor	363 (12.1%)	288 (9%)	651 (10.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>n= 3012 (100%)</b>	<b>n= 3118 (100 %)</b>	<b>N= 6130 (100%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork survey (2013)

**6.2 RQ2: What was the degree of prominence given to the crisis by the press?**

There was a high degree of prominence given the issue. Evidence of this lies in the 705 and 683 editorial items that occupied both the front page major and minor of the Punch and Vanguard newspapers respectively. The fact that 2,030 and 2,150 news items made the inside pages of the Vanguard and The Punch newspapers further justifies the prominence accorded the crisis by the press.

**Table 5: Showing the prominence given the crisis by the press**

Prominence	Vanguard	The Punch	Total
Front Page (major & minor)	683 (22.7%)	705 (22.6%)	1388 (22.6%)
Inside Page (major & minor)	2030 (67.4%)	2150 (69%)	4180 (68.2%)
Back Page (major & minor)	299 (9.9%)	263 (8.4%)	562 (9.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>n= 3012(100%)</b>	<b>n= 3118 (100%)</b>	<b>N= 6130 (100%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork survey (2013)

**6.3 RQ3. What was the direction of the newspapers' contents on the crisis?**

The direction of the editorial contents of the two newspapers was utterly unfavourable. 1426 editorial items in all the 31 editions of the Punch newspapers had negative denotative meanings while a total of 1276 of similar unfavourable contents reported by Vanguard newspapers.

**Table 6: Showing the direction of the papers' editorial contents**

Direction	Vanguard	The Punch	Total
Favourable/positive	821 (27.2%)	798 (25.6%)	1619 (26.4%)
Unfavourable/negative	1276 (42.4%)	1426 (45.7%)	2702 (44.1%)
Moderate	915 (30.4%)	894 (28.7%)	1809 (29.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>n=3012 (100%)</b>	<b>n=3118 (100%)</b>	<b>N=6130 (100%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork survey (2013)

**6.4 RQ4. What was the kind of tone used in the reportage of fuel subsidy removal crisis by the press?**

The tone of reportage of the two newspapers was generally harsh, showing editorial condemnation of the government's policy, as they both recorded a total of 4108 out of 6130 total editorial items.

**Table 7: Showing the tone of press reportage of the crisis.**

Tone	Vanguard	The Punch	Total
Harsh	1991 (66.1%)	2117 (67.9%)	4108 (67%)
Soft	1021 (33.9%)	1001 (32.1%)	2022 (33%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>n=3012(100%)</b>	<b>n=3118 (100%)</b>	<b>N=6130 (100%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork survey (2013)

**7. Discussion/Inference**

**7.1 RQ5. What inference(s) can be drawn on the relationship between press reportage of the issue and public perception of it?**

Certain inferences can stem from the intensive reportage of the crisis by the selected newspapers. According to Littlejohn and Foss (2008), agenda-setting function is a three-part process. First, the priority of issues to be discussed in the media or *media agenda* must be set. Second, the media agenda in some way affects or interacts with what the public thinks, creating the *public agenda*. Finally, the public agenda affects or interacts in some way with what policy-makers consider important, called the policy agenda. Thus by inference, media agenda affects public agenda, which in turn affects policy agenda. Clearly, therefore, Littlejohn and Foss' (2008) three-part process of agenda-setting function relates to press reportage of the crisis under analysis.

**7.2 Media Agenda**

The President's January 1, 2012 national broadcast in which he announced the removal of petroleum subsidy spurred media agenda. The setting of priority of the issue by the press indicates this, especially with such front-page headlines as:

***Fuel subsidy gone, petrol now N141*** (The Punch, Monday January 2, 2012)

***Fuel subsidy removal stirs anger, protests*** (The Punch, Tuesday January 3, 2012)

***Subsidy series: Five Questions President Jonathan Must Answer*** (Vanguard, January 1, 2012).

### **7.3 Public Agenda**

The priority of the crisis discussed by the press, media agenda, interacts with what the Nigerian public thinks, and this created public agenda, as Nigerians reacted seriously to the issue. Evidence in this regard lies in the casting of front page big headlines as:

***Nigerians groan under subsidy chaos*** (Vanguard, Tuesday January 3, 2012).

***We'll stand by the people, say Reps; call emergency meeting***

***UAD begins protest today***

***Subsidy removal ill timed - IBB***

***One killed as protests spread*** (Vanguard, Wednesday January 4, 2012).

***Lagos, Kano, Ilorin affected; Policemen protest in Lagos***

***Jonathan summons emergency FEC meeting***

***We need a revolution - Okogie***

***Subsidy protests rock Lagos, Ibadan, other cities*** (The Punch, Wednesday January 4, 2012)

***Two killed in Ilorin***

***No dialogue with FG – Labour***

***Melaye, six others released***

***Protests enter Day Four*** (Punch, Friday January 6, 2012)

***300 protesters wounded, 19 arrested in Kano***

***Jonathan to meet govs today over subsidy crisis***

### **7.4 Policy Agenda**

Reaction of Nigerians (public agenda) to what they considered as outrageous increase in the price of petrol as a result of the removal of fuel subsidy and outright condemnation of government policy made the policy-maker, who had earlier remained adamant and refused to shift ground, as reported by the newspapers, to eventually shift ground (policy agenda). This inference is drawn from the two newspapers' reportage of the reversion of fuel price from N141 to N97 by the Federal Government, as shown below.

***Shelve subsidy removal, strike – Reps tell FG, Labour*** (Vanguard, Monday Jan. 9, 2012)

***Petrol now N97 per litre*** (Punch, Monday Jan. 16, 2012)

***Petrol price now N97 per litre*** (Vanguard, Monday Jan. 16, 2012)

***Labour suspends street protests***

### **8. Conclusion**

After a thorough examination of the newspapers' reports on 2012 fuel subsidy removal crisis, as analysed above, it is safe to conclude that there was high editorial focus on the issue by the two newspapers. The editorial items of 6130 out of the total 8,944 serve as a premise upon which the conclusion hinges.

The two newspapers also gave considerable prominence to the issue. This conclusion stems from a significant number of stories with big headlines that occupied the front and other focal pages of the two newspapers.

The direction of editorial contents of the two newspapers was also not favourable, as the contents highlighted denotative meanings. The researchers noticed this through in-depth reading of the manifest contents of the two newspapers. The tone of reportage was also harsh. An evidence of this is from the newspapers' condemnation of the government policy by featuring headlines such as:

***Protests escalate*** (Vanguard, Friday, January 6, 2012)

***Oyo, Edo, Kaduna join***

***42 injured in Kano, as rally turns violent***

***Nigerians groan under subsidy chaos*** (Vanguard, Tuesday January 3, 2012).

### **9. Recommendations**

Following the consideration of a range of issues in this study, the following recommendations become relevant: First, the government/policy makers must know that the essence of governance is to ensure availability of relative welfare packages for the citizenry. Since one of the primary functions of the government is to ensure the people's welfare, hence, shouldering the responsibility of subsidy should have been one of such ways for the government to demonstrate this.

Second, government should put in place measures to prioritize the interest of the people.

Third, since a part of the subsidy has gone, government should make it up to those it presides over by continuing to make certain provisions to cushion inflationary effects in the country.

Fourth, the social welfare measures options such as purchase of government owned buses to reduce the peoples' transportation difficulties, and price fixing instrument/mechanism of the government could be considered to checkmate marketers who may tend to capitalize on the policy effect to cause unrealistic inflation within the society.

Finally, government must not appear weak to punish those deserving punishment, and reproach those that merit tongue-lashing. Since government has since noted that the subsidy funding enriches few members of a cabal, moves aimed at bringing the cabal to justice are necessary.

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