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Investigating the Effects of Minimum Wage and Fuel Subsidy Removal on Teachers’ Welfare and Productivity in Osun State, Nigeria: The Moderating Influence of Principals' Situational Leadership Style

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ABSTRACT

Economic policy changes, such as minimum wage adjustment and subsidy removal, can compromise employee, especially teachers’ welfare and productivity, yet the role of principals' situational leadership in mitigating these impacts remains unclear. This study, therefore, explored the perceived moderating role of principals' situational leadership style on the impact of minimum wage implementation and fuel subsidy removal on teachers' welfare and productivity in Osun State, Nigeria. The study employed concurrent mixed-method, while two-hundred and ten participants were purposively sampled among serving public secondary school teachers in Irewole, Isokan and Ayedaade federal constituency, Osun State, Nigeria. A validated self-designed instrument was used and the data obtained were analysed with the aid of both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The findings indicated that the teaching workforce in Osun State, Nigeria, is predominantly middle-aged (46%), female (65%), and relatively well-qualified (63% with First Degree/HND), with limited postgraduate representation (9% with Master's). Minimum wage implementation ($\beta = 0.070$, $p > 0.05$) had a non-significant positive impact, while fuel subsidy removal ($\beta = -0.012$, $p > 0.05$) had a non-significant negative impact on teachers' welfare and productivity. Together, they accounted for 10.1% variation. Low leadership exacerbates fuel subsidy removal's negative impact ($\beta = -0.25$, $p = 0.012$), while effective leadership improves outcomes ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.003$). Leadership style moderates this impact ($\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.010$). The study concluded that minimum wage and fuel subsidy removal have non-significant effects on teachers' welfare/productivity, but situational leadership moderates fuel subsidy removal's impact, with effective leadership improving outcomes. There is need to implement transportation allowances for teachers and prioritise leadership development training for principals to boost school resilience.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are key drivers in the educational system of both developed and developing countries, as they are in a position to steer the wheel towards achieving educational goals through effective resource management and coordination. Hence, teachers' roles are undeniably crucial across the globe (Aransi, 2020). This is to infer that a society's progress is linked to the quality of its teaching profession and educational system inputs. However, the government policies such as minimum wage legislation and fuel subsidy removal could influence both their welfare and productivity level.

The minimum wage is the lowest amount of money that employees are legally allowed to get, and it is meant to help them cover their essential living expenses. Fuel subsidy removal is the government's decision to discontinue providing financial support to maintain artificially low fuel prices. This involves terminating the payment of subsidies to oil companies and allowing market forces to determine fuel prices. These two policies can have a far-reaching effect on employees' welfare and productivity, respectively.

Based on the exchange rate of 1 USD = 1,362.86 NGN, Morocco ($374) tops the list with a minimum wage of ₦509,688.04, followed by Mauritius ($371.75) with ₦506,633.31, and Tunisia ($185.54) with ₦252,865.94. Algeria ($185.25) and Egypt ($149.79) follow, with ₦252,489.92 and ₦204,166.80 respectively. The list also features Botswana ($142.62), Cape Verde ($139.41), Lesotho ($139.40), Kenya ($118.20), and Mozambique ($104.92), with corresponding Naira values showcasing diverse minimum wage standards across Africa (Gbadebo, 2026). In Nigeria, the minimum wage of ₦70,000 is equivalent to approximately $51.35. In Nigeria, evidence abound that there was a discrepancy between the salary mandated by the National Minimum Wage Act 2024 and global benchmarks. This has raised a concern about whether the set wage was sufficient enough to meet the fundamental requirements and needs of the salary paid workers (Meshach & Matthew, 2024).

On the part of employment generation, Onwuka, Simon, and Unachukwu (2025) claimed that minimum wage and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have negligible influence on informal employment. This underscores the complexities of jobless growth and the limitations of wage policies in the informal sector. Research by Giotis and Mylonas (2022) indicated that minimum wages and employment are not significantly correlated, implying that wage policies may have a more complex influence on labour markets than traditionally assumed. With respect to the productivity and welfare of existing employees, higher minimum wages are posited to yield numerous benefits, including enhanced productivity, improved health outcomes, and increased worker motivation, ultimately contributing to improved economic performance. Furthermore, increased wages are believed to stimulate consumer spending, driving demand for goods and services and generating a positive economic multiplier effect. The minimum wage is also regarded as a crucial instrument for poverty alleviation and promoting social equity, thereby fostering a more stable society (Patel & Kumar, 2024). Coviello, Deserranno, and Persico (2022) found that a minimum wage increase was associated with increased productivity and lower termination rates among US retail workers, especially those with pay often at or near the minimum wage. However, this effect was diminished when workers were monitored less intensively, highlighting the importance of management practices in shaping the impact of minimum wage policies. Fuel subsidy removal cannot be an exception.

The neo-classical economic theory of government policy posits that a fundamental responsibility of the state is to protect citizen welfare through policy decisions. The removal of fuel subsidy has exacerbated the living conditions of the working class in Nigeria, as increased fuel prices have had a ripple effect on the cost of basic necessities, further straining household budgets (Oladimeji & Umar, 2024). Abdulganiyu, Abubakar, and Magaji (2026) noted that removing subsidies strains household finances and disrupts food distribution and availability, respectively. Wazakari and Bulu (2025) found that removing fuel subsidies had a significant negative impact on employees' purchasing power, cost of living, and standard of living. They noted increased household expenses and reduced ability to afford basic needs, pointing to increased financial strain.

Previous studies on factors influencing teachers' productivity and welfare have focused largely on variables such as principal style, job satisfaction, and work-related flow (Aransi, 2022; Sanni, Aransi, Esan, & Ayodele, 2024), irregular payment of modulated salary (Aransi, 2020), teachers' self-efficacy and professional development programs (Sanni & Aransi, 2023), work environment, teacher motivation, training and development, and school resources (Sayman &

Atienzar, 2023; Aransi, 2025), management factors, working environment, and wages (Hasbay & Altındag, 2018), with little attention paid to minimum wage and fuel subsidy removal.

Another potential research gap in this study is the limited understanding of how principals' situational leadership style moderates the impact of economic policies (minimum wage and fuel subsidy removal) on teachers' welfare and productivity, particularly in the Nigerian context. Existing literature highlights the effects of these policies on workers, but the role of school leadership in mitigating or exacerbating these effects remains underexplored.

The removal of fuel subsidies and adjustments to minimum wage has significant implications for teachers' welfare and productivity in Nigeria. However, school leadership can influence the effectiveness of these policies. This study focuses on Osun State, Nigeria, examining how principals' situational leadership styles moderate the impact of these economic policies on teachers. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for developing strategies to support teachers and improve educational outcomes in challenging economic environments.

Research Questions

The questions below guided the study.

1) What is the relative and composite impact of minimum wage implementation and fuel subsidy removal on teachers' welfare and productivity in Osun State, Nigeria?
2) What is the moderating role of the perceived principals' situational leadership style towards the impact of fuel subsidy removal on teachers' welfare and productivity in Osun State, Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The study's broad objectives are to explore the perceived moderating role of principals' situational leadership style on the impact of minimum wage implementation and fuel subsidy removal on teachers' welfare and productivity in Osun State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to;

1) examine the relative and composite influence of minimum wage implementation and fuel subsidy removal on teachers' welfare and productivity in Osun State, Nigeria; and
2) investigate the moderating role of the perceived principals' situational leadership style towards the impact of fuel subsidy removal on teachers' welfare and productivity in Osun State, Nigeria.

2. METHOD, DATA, ANALYSIS

The study employed concurrent mixed-mothed. This allowed simultaneous collection of the qualitative and quantitative data used in the study. This is considered as a way of making the empirical analysis and outcomes more robust. As the weakness of the one way of the data collection is being addressed by the strength of the other.

All serving teachers in public secondary schools in Irewole, Isokan and Ayedaade federal constituency formed the target population for the study. These three local governments were purposively sampled, as they are good location for teachers residing in city like Ibadan, Oyo State, and whose work in Osun State, Nigeria.

Two-hundred and ten (210) teachers who had spent ten years and above in their respectively schools across these three local governments were selected for questionnaire, while three teachers one per sampled LGAs were selected for qualitative sections. This category of teachers was purposively sampled. As they are in position to share their experiences on their welfare and productivity level, before and during recent minimum wage implementation in the state and subsidy removal policy directive of the federal government.

The study employed a self-designed questionnaire and interview guide. The questionnaire has two sections. The first section contains demographic information of the respondents, while the second section comprises questionnaire items with five subscales. The subscales are: Minimum Wage Implementation Questionnaire (MWIQ), Subsidy Removal Questionnaire (SRQ), Teachers' Welfare and Productivity Questionnaire (TWPQ), and Principals' Situational Leadership Style Questionnaire (PSLSQ). The questionnaire items use a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Agree (A), Disagree (D), to Strongly Disagree (SD).

However, the Minimum Wage Implementation Questionnaire subscale has six items, comprising the current minimum wage is sufficient to meet my basic needs as a teacher, the minimum wage has improved my overall well-being, the minimum wage is regularly reviewed to keep up with the current inflation rate in the country, among others. The Subsidy Removal

Questionnaire subscale has six items, consisting of the subsidy removal has affected my ability as a teacher to afford basic necessities, it has increased my transportation costs to and from school, it has impacted my ability to afford professional development opportunities, among others.

The Teachers' Welfare and Productivity Questionnaire subscale had eleven items, with five items for welfare and six items for productivity. The welfare section had items such as, as a teacher, I have access to car and housing loans, affordable healthcare services, a safe and conducive working environment, to mention a few. The productivity segment had items such as I collaborate with colleagues to improve teaching practices, I use effective teaching methods to engage my students, I am able to manage classroom behaviour effectively, among others.

Lastly, the Perceived Principals' Situational Leadership Style Questionnaire subscale had six items, such as my principal seeks alternative funding sources to offset subsidy removal effects for teachers in my school, identifies areas needing support due to subsidy removal, encourages cost-saving measures in school operations, among others.

The content validity of the instrument was ensured by making items on the questionnaire align with the study's specific objectives. The face validity was guaranteed by using the Times New Roman font 12 with 1.5 line spacing. The instrument was administered on twenty-five (25) serving teachers in public secondary schools in Oriade local government area of Osun state, Nigeria. The Cronbach Alpha reliability technique was employed which produced 0.89, 0.76 0.84, and 0.79 for Minimum Wage Implementation Questionnaire (MWIQ), Subsidy Removal Questionnaire (SRQ), Teachers' Welfare, Productivity Questionnaire (TWPQ), and Perceived Principals' Situational Leadership Style Questionnaire (PSLSQ), respectively. This indicated that the instrument was reliable.

The study employed descriptive statistical tool such as simple percentage for demographic distribution of the respondents while regression analysis was used to answer all the research questions. While, responses from the interviews were content analysed.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

Variable		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	25-35	12	6
	36-45	62	31
	46-55	93	46
	56 and above	34	17
Total		**201**	**100%**
Sex	Male	71	35
	Female	130	65
Total		**201**	**100%**
Educational Qualification	NCE/OND	56	28
	First Degree/HND	126	63
	Master	19	9
Total		**201**	**100%**
Teaching Experience	10-15 Years	77	38
	16-20 Years	62	31
	21 Years and above	62	31
Total		**201**	**100%**

Table 1 contained demographic distribution of the respondents. Out of the two-hundred and ten copies of questionnaire administered only two-hundred and one well-filled copies were used. The results indicated that the majority (46%) of respondents sampled were between 46-55 years of age, which indicated a predominantly middle-aged group. This was followed by those between 36-45 years of age with (31%), 56 years and above had (17%), and the minority (6%) are between 25-35 years old. The age distribution of respondents suggests an aging teaching workforce; this implies potential retirements and possible gaps in experience and succession planning in the near future of teaching profession. The findings indicate that one hundred and thirty (130) participants, which amounted to 65%, were females by sex, while seventy-one (71) participants, which accounted for 35%, were males. The female-dominated teaching workforce may lead to potential stereotypes about the profession's perceived value.

The outcomes indicated that the majority of respondents (63%) hold a First Degree/HND, followed by NCE/OND holders (28%), and a smaller percentage (9%) have Master's qualifications. This indicated a relatively low level of postgraduate education among the respondents. This showcased that the teaching profession has a solid base of qualified educators in the studied location, but limited postgraduate representation may indicate restricted opportunities for advanced development which may potentially affect teaching quality and innovative capacity of the employees. The teaching workforce shows a mix of experience levels, with 38% in mid-career (10-15 years) and 31% each in the 16-20 years and 21+ years brackets. This mix of experience levels suggested a stable workforce with opportunities for knowledge sharing between seasoned educators and mid-career teachers which would potentially enhance teaching quality and institutional knowledge transfer.

Table 1. Relative and Composite Impact of Minimum Wage Implementation and Fuel Subsidy Removal on Teachers' Welfare and Productivity in Osun State, Nigeria

R	R^2	Adj. R^2	S. E
.411a	**.209**	**.101**	**11.585**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	25687.794	13	1975.984	14.722	.000[b]
Residual	25098.425	187	134.216		
Total	50786.219	200			

Model	B	S. E	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	45.921	12.127	3.787		.000
Minimum Wage Implementation	0.996	0.470	0.070	2.017	0.065
Fuel Subsidy Removal	0.557	0.792	-0.012	0.303	0.783

With respect to relative effect, the results in Table 2 reveals that minimum wage implementation (β = 0.070, t = 2.017, p > 0.05) and fuel subsidy removal (β = -0.012, t = 0.303, p > 0.05) had non-significant positive and negative influences on teachers' welfare and productivity, respectively. Specifically, a unit increase in the minimum wage for teachers is associated with a 0.070 increase in their welfare and productivity, whereas an increase in fuel prices due to subsidy removal corresponds to a 0.012 decline in teachers' welfare. On the part of composite, the results from the ANOVA revealed that the minimum wage implementation and fuel subsidy removal collectively accounted for 10.1% variation that took place in teachers' productivity and welfare level, respectively. In their responses, the informants claimed as thus:

The minimum wage implementation was a relief, but fuel subsidy removal's impact on transportation costs has significantly reduced my take-home pay and affected productivity (KII/Female/2026).

Fuel subsidy removal has hit us hard, with increased transportation costs negating the benefits of the minimum wage increase (KII/Male/2026).

Transportation costs are killing us; the minimum wage boost wasn't enough to cover the fuel price increase (KII/Male/2026).

Table 2. Moderating Role of the Perceived Principals' Situational Leadership Style towards the Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Teachers' Welfare and Productivity in Osun State, Nigeria

	B	S.E	β	t	Sig.
Fuel Subsidy Removal (FSR)	-0.42	0.15	-0.25	-2.80	0.012
Situational Leadership Style (SLS).	0.38	0.12	0.32	3.17	0.003
FSR* SLS (Interaction)	0.21	0.08	0.18	2.63	0.010

The results in Table 3 show that fuel subsidy removal has a negative impact on teachers' welfare and productivity when leadership is low (β = -0.25, p = 0.012), but effective situational leadership is associated with better outcomes (β = 0.32, p = 0.003). Leadership style moderates this impact (β = 0.18, p = 0.010), suggesting that strong leadership can mitigate the negative effects on welfare and enhance productivity. For teachers and the teaching profession, this implies that investing in leadership development and support can help buffer against external economic shocks and promote a more resilient education system. In alignment, the informants reported as thus:

My principal is very hands-on and understanding; he is flexible with schedules and often checks in on us, which makes a big difference in how we cope with challenges like fuel price increases (KII/Female/2026).

My principal demonstrates a people-oriented leadership approach, prioritising staff welfare and exhibiting flexibility in administrative decisions, which has been instrumental in cushioning the effects of economic challenges (KII/Male/2026).

My principal's style is quite rigid, focusing more on tasks than people, which makes coping with the fuel price hikes even tougher for me and my colleagues (KII/Male/2026).

Discussion

The study revealed that minimum wage implementation had a positive influence on teachers' welfare and productivity, although the effect was not statistically significant. This suggested that increasing the minimum wage for teachers may lead to improvements in their overall welfare and job performance. The positive relationship implies that higher wages can enhance teacher satisfaction and motivation, potentially leading to better educational outcomes. In alignment, Aransi (2020) found that although the irregular payment of modulated salaries did not hinder teachers' productivity, it hindered their ability to meet certain welfare-enhancing targets, which is consistent with the findings of this study. García and Han (2022) discovered that districts offering higher base salaries to teachers tend to have significantly higher Mathematics and English test scores compared to districts with lower teacher base salaries. Notably, higher teacher base salaries also contribute to reducing the achievement gap between white and minority students (black and Hispanic), as test scores of minority students show greater improvement.

Ifeanyi-Ewuzie (2025) concluded that external motivation, comprising rewards, salary advancement, awards for teachers, seminar/workshop attendance, technology integration, and teacher leadership development, had a positive influence on teachers' productivity, especially academic performance of students. Li and Wang (2022) claimed that higher pay significantly increased teachers' job satisfaction, which in turn improved their classroom performance in China. Munthe (2023) discovered that in several developing countries, especially those with underfunded education systems, salary dissatisfaction resulted in high teacher turnover rates and disengagement, highlighting the importance of pay in retaining teachers and ensuring consistent, high-quality instruction.

Tan and Zhang (2024) found that teacher retention initiatives aimed at raising salaries have been successful in increasing retention rates, which in turn has improved the quality of instruction. Patel and Kumar (2024) found that pay had a greater impact on teacher performance in rural India, where working conditions were more challenging, compared to urban areas where internal motivators like professional respect and student engagement were more influential. Calma

(2026) corroborated that pay has a significant impact when paired with other internal and external motivators on teachers' welfare and productivity.

The findings indicated that fuel subsidy removal had a negative influence on teachers' welfare and productivity, though the effect was not statistically significant. This indicated that the removal of fuel subsidies, likely leading to increased fuel prices, may adversely affect teachers' economic situation and job performance. The negative impact could be due to increased transportation costs and overall cost of living, reducing teachers' disposable income and affecting their focus on work.

In agreement, Joy and Philip (2024) found that fuel subsidy removal had a high-level negative impact on lecturers' research and publications, class attendance, invigilation, and supervisory functions, respectively. Eze and Umeh (2023) highlight that subsidy removal threatens staff welfare by reducing disposable income, increasing financial stress, and disrupting work-life balance. Specifically, increased transportation costs have led to absenteeism and reduced punctuality among university staff, exacerbating challenges in Nigeria's tertiary education sector. Okon (2022) noted that subsidy removal strains educational institutions'' budgets due to increased costs for utilities, transportation, and maintenance which would potentially compromise work environments and further erode employees' morale and productivity. Wazakari and Bulu (2025) concluded that subsidy removal has adverse effects on tertiary institution workers' socio-economic well-being by impacting their welfare and productivity.

Felix and Ojo (2025) found that fuel subsidy removal incurred significant costs, including increased transportation costs that adversely affected transport firms' passenger traffic volume. The study also revealed that subsidy removal significantly impacted transport firms' cash flow performance due to reduced passenger traffic, decreased patronage, and fuel accessibility constraints. Anijah (2024) found that fuel subsidy removal has led to increased financial strain, negatively impacting staff well-being and productivity. Increased commuting costs and financial pressures have reduced staff morale, motivation, and professional engagement, resulting in higher absenteeism and disrupted work-life balance. Woyengitari (2025) found a significant and positive relationship between fuel subsidy removal and university employees' performance, which contradicts the current findings.

The findings revealed the critical role of school leadership in navigating economic challenges among teachers. When principals exhibit effective situational leadership, they can reduce the negative impact of fuel subsidy removal on teachers' welfare and boost productivity. This underscores the need for targeted leadership training and support to enhance school resilience. By investing in leadership development, policymakers can help mitigate the effects of economic shocks on education and foster a more stable teaching environment. This has implications for policy priorities and resource allocation in education management.

Zhao and Sheng (2019) found that task structure moderates the relationship between authoritarian leadership and employee engagement. This suggests that the impact of leadership style on engagement depends on the nature of the tasks involved. Alkhraishi et al. (2026) found that organizational commitment moderated the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction among nurses, with a weaker leadership impact when commitment was low. This underscores transformational leadership's importance in boosting job satisfaction, especially with strong organizational commitment. The findings of Darmawan et al. (2022) indicate that leadership style does not exert a moderating influence on the relationships between motivation and employee performance, as well as remuneration and employee performance, which appears to contradict the current study's results.

4. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that minimum wage implementation and fuel subsidy removal have positive and negative but non-significant effects on teachers' welfare and productivity. However, situational leadership plays an essential role in moderating the impact of fuel subsidy removal, with effective leadership associated with better outcomes. To strengthen secondary education, government and stakeholders should address workforce challenges through succession planning, mentorship programs, and targeted recruitment to balance age and gender representation among teachers. Quality can be enhanced by prioritizing postgraduate training, subject-specific expertise, and pedagogical skills, while pairing experienced educators with mid-career teachers to foster knowledge transfer. Regular minimum wage increases, transport allowances, and subsidized transportation should cushion economic pressures like fuel subsidy removal, boosting teacher welfare and productivity. Additionally, policymakers should prioritize leadership development for principals and update education policies to ensure adequate resource allocation, thereby enhancing school resilience and student outcomes.

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