

**CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN NIGERIA:
SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES**



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ROAD CRASHES AND CRIME INCIDENCES AS FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST SUCESSFUL UTILISATION OF COMMERCIAL MOTORCYCLES AS MEANS OF PUBLIC TRANSIT.

By

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The relieve that the operations of commercial motorcyclists brought to the seemingly intractable traffic congestion and shortages in supply of transportation needs on most Nigerian intra-urban routes in the last two decades appears to be coming at great costs. The recent upsurge in crime rates and road crashes which are arguably related to the operations of these commercial cyclists among other factors is pointer to this assertion. The paper analyzed the socio-economic gains and losses directly attributable to the operation of these commercial cyclists in the Ibadan metropolis based on data collected from 120 respondents. Focus group discussion was equally held with the operators of these motorcycles. Regression analysis of study variables (location, sex, time of the day, age) revealed that these variables were not seen as determinants of becoming victims of crashes, whereas they are adjudged to be significant factors in becoming crime victims on commercial motorcycles. It was equally discovered that females, the very young and aged respondents were more vulnerable to criminal attacks on commercial motorcycles.

Recommendations on effective management of the nation's intra-urban traffic maintenance were subsequently made.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The upward swing in mobility crisis being experienced by most Nigerian cities has been foretold by experts in the public transport field. The call became more stringent particularly at the twilight of the twentieth century (Filani, 1988; Ikya, 1993; Ogunsanya, 1993). For example, Bolade (1993) warned that '...by year 2000 A.D. more than 12 cities in Nigeria will have population in excess of 1 million inhabitants and most of them will require adequate public transport for effective functioning' In spite of these counsels however, the sad reality is that most cities in the country today are battling with the monster of mobility crisis and, it is having dire consequences on the overall socio-economic development of the country.

The provision of efficient, effective and safe public urban transport system has become an albatross to successive government in Nigeria. The unprecedented growth of urbanization in Nigeria in the late twentieth century (Ominu & Onokerhoraye, 1996), especially during the oil boom era has become a major challenge to policy makers and analysts in the transport sector; the recurring problem of **how best to safely and cheaply transport the teeming urban populace has remain a daunting task.**

Adeniji (1985) opined that public transport system remains **the most effective means of transporting commuters within Nigeria's urban landscape, rather than private vehicle ownership because of its obvious cost advantage.** Provision of commercial road transport services (both on inter and intra urban routes) in Nigeria's urban centres has remained largely in the hands of private business operators. The government at various times in the past had futilely tried investing in provision of cab fleet, and transit buses to ease the commuting burden of the teeming urban populace. The success of government intervention over the years is however questionable because of the unrelenting chaos and logjams that daily characterizes trips across most urban centres in Nigeria, especially at peak hours (Okoko 1998; Atubi & Onokala, 2004).

The downturn in Nigeria economy occasioned by the structural adjustment programme (SAP) of the late 1980s, and the consequent devaluation of the naira (Nigeria national currency) had crunchy effects on the national transport system, importation of new motor vehicle became unbearably expensive and subsequently became the exclusive preserve of the rich (Filani, 1988). The maintenance of existing road infrastructure and construction of new ones were relegated to the background, the fact that transparency is questionable in the awarding and the execution of the few road contracts done further compounded the problem.

Paradoxically, the downturn in the economic fortunes of the nation which affected public investment in intra-urban transport scheme never affected the significant annual increment in the urban population. According to Barret (1993), about 40 million (35% of the entire Nigeria population in 1990 lived in urban centers) and the number rose to around 75 millions (50% of the entire Nigerian population) by year 2000. The attendant mobility needs of most urban commuters are clearly not being met. It is a truism that profound changes in a national economy coupled with corresponding changes in technology, cultural and societal variables has defined the face of intra-urban mobility in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries than any other factors. The dependence of the average commuter in Nigeria cities on the para-transit or intermediate mode of public transport has become an age long tradition, and this should not be surprising with the cost of mobility being the overriding determining factor for most mobility decisions made (Okoko, 1998).

The inadequacy of this mode of public transport (taxi-cabs, mini buses and big buses) in meeting the needs of the travelling public reached its zenith in the early part of 1990's. The resultant effect was that the average commuter spent large amount of time waiting at bus stops and alongside main roads (Filani, 1988). The yearning gap between the demand for transport needs on most urban routes and its supply created the room for the emergence of commercial motorcyclists. The commercial motorcyclists operations provided a leeway to the seemingly intractable and perennial problems of shortages in urban transport supply and a means of beating the typical bedlam and chaos that daily characterized movement on most urban

road networks. In recent time, however, the operations of commercial motor cyclists has become a serious cause for concern for various stakeholders (residents, policy formulators, traffic regulating agencies etc) The twin evil of road crashes, and upsurge in crime rates that are arguably traceable to the activities of some of these cyclists are casting a huge doubt on whatsoever gains the operations of this mode of transport has brought to the intractable problem of urban transportation. For example it is not unusual to see sign post conspicuously display on the gates of some neighborhood within major cities in the country banning commercial motorcyclists from plying routes in such neighborhood. Most neighborhood vigilante associations are of the school of thought that, criminals often pose as commercial motorcyclists to perpetuate nefarious acts in these neighborhoods (Fabiya,2004).

The casualty figures' arising from the accidents involving commercial motorcyclists are of great loss to the economy of the nation, Analysts are also of the opinion that some questionable characters are hiding under the guise of providing commercial cyclists services to perpetuate their nefarious and criminal activities within Nigeria's urban landscape. (Idowu 2006: Odufunwa & Oyesiku 2002). The economic cost of road accidents in developing countries has been estimated to be over one percent of these countries gross national products (GNP) (Transport Research Laboratory 1991). These scarce resources unfortunately are the ones these growing economies can ill afford to lose as most of the replacement of vehicular spare parts, drugs and hospital equipments are imported at huge costs furthering depletion of the meager resources of these countries.

In Ibadan, it is observable that the designs of most routes on the intra-city network were not meant to cater for the volume and types of traffic (including commercial cyclists) which they are now required to carry. The highway and intra-urban route networks were mostly legacies from the colonial periods which are proving inadequate in meeting the contemporary needs, it is debatable if adequate attention and details were paid in the original construction design to pedestrians, slow moving vehicles, articulated vehicles and commercial motorcyclists. The exponential growth in population size of Ibadan and its consequent increase in spatial extent (Oyinloye &

Adeniyi, 2006) has brought the problem to the fore in recent time. The advent of crimes like armed robbery, stealing and snatching of properties done by criminals on motorbikes within the metropolis has also been more frequent. Moreover there is the dangerous practice of carrying large amount of money to transact business in an economy that is still mainly cash based. This has always been a lure to criminal elements that often uses the flexibility, speed, and the ability of the motorcycle to weave through snarl ups, and dispossess innocent citizens of their valuables. Arguably the purported gain attributable to the operations of commercial motorcyclists paled into insignificance when compared with, the frightening cost in terms of life and material loses which are often the consequences of these crashes and criminal acts.

Extant studies on this discourse include among others the one done by Ogunsanya and Galtima (1993), an empirical study which examined and analysed the origin, characteristics of the supplier and operators of this new mode of public transport, Also Okoko (1998) and Atubi and Onakala (2004) conducted similar researches highlighting the factors that necessitated the emergence of this new mode of transport, and the problem assailing its smooth operations. The studies however focused heavily on accessibility, functionality and pricing system of this new mode of public transport.

The objective of this study is to examine the convenience, safety and functionality of this mode, especially in light of the crashes and crime incidences that has now become more rampant, allegedly perpetuated often times by ill-trained riders and, criminals posing as commercial motorcyclists. To do this effectively, this study is organized into five sections. Following this introductory section, study area and conceptual issues relating to subject of discourse are examined; section three examined the methodology, while section four and five are dedicated to the analysis, conclusion and recommendations respectively.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES.

Mackay (1974) propounded what analysts considered an overriding approach to the theoretical explanation of road accidents, he opined that road accidents can be categorized into three main segments, namely: (i) Pre-crash (ii) Crash and (iii) Post-crash. He

described the pre-crash phase as the stage which involved all measures taken in order to reduce or stop road accidents and this include amongst others, safety regulation, road design and automobile safety design, the critical determinant factors of this stage include, the environment, vehicles, road users, the design of the road facility and safety measures in place.

The crash phase is characterized with the dynamics of the actual collision especially the impact on the human lives involved in the crash and the material loses involved. The last phase is the Post-crash phase. At this phase, assessment of crashes is done, and preventive measures are proffered in order to mitigate future re-occurrence. Adamu and Iyaniwura (1997) concluded that crashes on roads are often as a result of dysfunctional interaction between three identified components of the road transport; these are vehicles, roads and the road users. They opined that the general assumption that crashes occur more on bad roads (windy, untarred, gravel or rough) can be misleading as crashes occurs mainly whenever there are defective interactions between these components,

Clarke and Eck (2003) asserted that the immediate environment of a would-be crime scene is an enormous determinant of its occurrence; they opined that the absence of capable law enforcement agents, presence of targets and right timing will always trigger the desire to commit crime in criminals. Cohen and Felson (1979) stated in Routine Activities Theory that 'Crime occurs whenever there are convergence in space and time of these three factors these are the availability of a motivated offender, absence of a crime preventing officer and the availability of a suitable target' Arguably the risk associated with trips on the intra-city routes in recent time in Ibadan are accentuated by the threat pose by the operations of commercial cyclists, especially criminal elements (who disguises as commercial bike riders), ill-trained and inexperienced riders. The promotion of road transport as a means of mobility within Nigerian urban landscape is at risk based on the activities of these commercial motorcycle operators.

The public transit system (Newton, 2004), notes is a multifaceted arena with a complex interaction of settings (transit buses and taxicabs), facilities (motor parks/bus stops) and users (union of road transport workers, passengers and traders). Research

in spatial tendencies of crime has revealed strong regional differentials over urbanised environment, the effects of contextual variable such as anomie, deprivation, unemployment and poverty on urban location are critical determinant of the level of criminality of a location. (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1999). There is an urgent need for a holistic review of the environment surrounding the activities of mass transit operation in Nigeria cities. This is inevitable in order to safeguard the lives and properties of commuters. The prohibitive costs of in terms of life and finances that are traceable to carnages on roads in Nigeria should be worrisome to all stakeholders. This scenario is to reasonable extent similar to what is obtainable in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Research has shown that there was nearly over three hundred percent increase in fatality rates on sub-Saharan African roads for the period in a twenty-year period whereas there was a decline of nearly minus fifty percent in Europe in the corresponding period (Transport Research Laboratory 1991).

METHODOLOGY

Data used in this research work were collected through both quantitative and qualitative method. The techniques involve the administration of questionnaires in Ibadan city on 120 respondents, who are passengers. The city was divided into five major locations for effective distribution the locations were Challenge, Dugbe, Sango-University of Ibadan, Ojoo and Iwo road. These locations represent major terminals for both motor vehicles and commercial motor cycles. Efforts were made to interpret the questions into Yoruba language where necessary.

Qualitative data were collected through focus group discussion involving operators of commercial motorcycles at Iwo road, the unofficial headquarters of the state branch of the duly registered Association of Commercial Motorcycle Riders of Nigeria (ACOMORON). Leaders of the commercial motor park helped in organizing their members and equally provided useful insights, particularly on how the parks are organized, measures put in place for the welfare of the members and how criminal elements are prevented from infiltrating the ranks of operators. Based on the distributed

questionnaires, information on the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents was elicited. Respondents provided information on their perceived effectiveness of commercial motorcycles as a means of mobility within Ibadan city; and its attendant effect on enhancing the general living conditions of Ibadan residents. Information on the perceived risks associated with riding commercial motorcycles were provided by the respondents. The views of the operators on the contributory factors to upsurge in crime and accident rates were also sought through the FCGs session. The statistical techniques employed included linear regression, multiple regression analysis and simple percentages.

RESULTS

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents (Passengers).

The breakdown of the sex ratio of the sampled population showed that male respondents accounted for 54.16 percent of the total 120 respondents, while the female respondents accounts for 45.8 percent. The age distribution shows that 50 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 18-45, while 25 percent were below 18 years. A closer look at the breakdown revealed that a larger percentage of the respondents were below 50 years. This should not be surprising though as most of such respondents are more active, and needs the speed and flexibility of the bikes to reach their destinations. The ability to be more daring (risk taking) and non-ownership of personal vehicle may also be a consideration. A cursory look at the educational level of the respondents revealed that a paltry 4.16 per cent are without any form of education, while greater proportion (some 60 per cent had secondary schools or are in tertiary institutions. Educational status of the respondents is pertinent because it ease considerably the collection of information. 45 per cent of the respondents sampled were schooling, this cut across all levels from primary to tertiary. It is discernible that some parents have 'arrangement' in place with some operators to help in 'school runs' for their kids, while students in tertiary institution generally patronizes commercial cyclists because of its flexibility and speed advantages. The obvious fact is that the popularity of commercial motor cycle as means of mobility cut across all occupational types.

Characteristics of Respondents (Operators).

The study reveals that the bulk of commercial motorcycle operators are young, married males, between 18-39 years old. All of the ten participants in the FGD have a form of education or the other, with most claiming they have attained the secondary school leaving certificate (SSCE). The picture that the marital, educational and age status painted is that of a seemingly crop of conscientious operators, this is however a bit contradictory to the general belief that most operators are not responsible. The view of the chairman of the Iwo road unit of Association of Commercial Motorcycle Riders of Nigeria (ACOMORON) on such belief is that, the few bad ones among the members of the association are the ones that are accountable for such irresponsible acts. He explained as follows:

“Nearly all our members are literate, there is hardly any without at least primary school leaving certificate. This vocation is a stop gap for most of us.....we had different goals and pursuits; and so we are mostly married men with some level of training and responsibility, as a matter of fact we became operators because we need a source of livelihood”.

He however admitted that cases of substance abuse is rampant among riders, claiming that the need to combat cold and chest infection often makes some riders to indulge in this act.

Upsurge in crime and accident rates in the city

Most of the operators interviewed agreed that there has been an upsurge in both crime and accident rates within the metropolis in recent time. For example the Chairman opined that:

“Yes, it is true crime and accident rates have increased in recent time, but it should not be traced solely to us, we’ve had cases of some of our members being involved in terrible accidents, one is still yet to fully recover from injuries sustained in a recent crash, we too have our fears. I personally pray before going out and also try to avoid plying same routes with trailers. Upsurge in crime is not however caused by us”.

Another participant equally corroborated this view by pointing out that nearly all the members in his unit are trained as artisans, he explained:

"Most of us are trained artisans, we are not criminals. criminals can't withstand the rigors and risk associated with being an okada rider, our choosing this vocation in the first place is because we seek alternative from crime, criminals don't belong to ACOMORON, before you can be registered, we ask for guarantors who must be responsible members of the union or credible citizens, we also know the abode and relatives of our members. We have a welfare team and we assist each other when needs arises".

Yet another participant was of the opinion that accidents particularly are caused by all road users:

"Most road users are impatient, while it is true that some okada riders are without prerequisite riding skills, some automobiles drivers are also guilty of this, women most especially can be careless, some drivers also make phone calls when driving, while commercial buses and taxi operators, sees us as rivals and sometimes deliberately try to run us off the road, sometimes pedestrians even find it difficult to give right way to on coming bike".

On what need to be done to reduce accident and crime rates prevalent among bike riders, most of the participants recognized unemployment, impatience and substance abuse as the leading causes of misdemeanor among operators. A participant observed thus:

"Most okada riders do not learn how to ride formally, we are in the business because of unemployment. Majority do not own the bike, we deliver amount which ranges from ^500-^1500 daily depending on the manufacturer of the bike and its general condition. For example...bajaj and boxer motorcycles owner will expect at least ^1000 daily, it is after this that we 'hustle' for our own take home, you have to go on many trips to do this. The urge to meet these goals usually causes impatience and carelessness which can result in accident".

Another participant however had a slightly different opinion, he claimed that:

"Policemen harassment of okada riders is a leading cause of mishap, even when you wear your helmet and your papers

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are in order, they still chases us and they sometimes collect as much as ^500, so okada riders in order to beat check points sometimes over speed or take dangerous routes, The activities of the official of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) is equally a problem, they forcibly collect unlawful levies from our members, and sometimes in bid to avoid this, accident can occur”.

Table 1: The relevancy of commercial motorcycles as means of mobility within the metropolis intra-urban routes

Sources	Type III Sum of Squares	DF	Mean of Square	F	Significance
Corrected Model	42.631(a)	34	1.254	1.201	.247
Intercept	162.489	1	162.489	155.6654	.000
Location	3.886	3	1.295	1.241	.300
Sex	12.488	3	4.149	3.975	.011
Age	6.885	4	1.721	1.49	.170
Location * Sex	3.993	3	1.331	1.275	.258
Location * Age	11.317	9	1.257	1.205	.303
Location * Sex * Age	10.383	6	1.730	1.658	.142
Error	87.689	84	.1044		
Total	643.000	119			
Corrected Total	130.319	118			

R Square = 327 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.55).

Results from regression coefficient of the calculated values in table (1) shows that independent variables (location, sex, age) of respondents within the city have a score of 0.55. This implies that 55% of the sampled population, regardless of their location, age and gender differences, believed that improved movement within the city's intra-urban routes can be explained by the operation of commercial cyclists.

Table 2: Believe that commercial motorcycles are leading causes of road mishaps within Ibadan Metropolis

Options	Response	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	66	55
Agreed	30	25
Disagreed	12	10
Strongly disagreed	8	6.7
No response	4	3.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

Based on the responses, (shown in table 2) it is obvious that majority of the respondents (55%) were of the strong opinion that commercial motorcyclists are one of the leading causes of crashes on roads within the metropolis. The fact the design and the construction of most of these roads were done with little or no consideration for the operations of commercial cyclists make any form of trip on these bikes hazardous exercise. The temperament, riding skill and composure of the cyclists are other critical factors as most commercial cyclists are with little or no training on Highway Code and are often impatient.

Table 3: Determinants of Accidents Victim

Model	Sum of Square	Difference	Mean Square	F	Significance
Regression	1.125	4	.281	3.85	.411
Residual	32.572	114	.282		
Total	33.697	188			

Predictor (Constant): Time, Sex, Age and Location

Dependent Variable: Determinant of Accident Victim.

Table 3b : Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.183	0.33	0.33	.53452

Predictor (Constant) Time, Age, Sex and Location.

Results from regression analysis carried out on the determinants of the likelihood of a passenger falling a victim of commercial motorcycle crash when independent variables like age, gender, time of the day of boarding such cycles and location of the passenger within the metropolis are considered had a F statistical value of 3.85 at a significance level of .071. Comparison of the significance value with the standard significance value for research in the Social Sciences (i.e. with values < 0.05) signifies that the variation is not significant which means that the independent variable (time, age, sex and location) do not effectively explain the the dependent variable (determinant of accident victim).

From the model summary above the regression coefficient had a R square value of 0.33 or 33%. This implies that independent variables like Time, Age, Sex and Location gave a poor explanation of chances of a passenger becoming an accident victim, it can therefore be inferred that the possibility of a passenger becoming an accident victim on a commercial motorcycle is not a function of variables like the age, gender, time of boarding of commercial motorcycle in the day and location within the city.

Table 4: Increment in Crime Wave as a results of the operations of Commercial Cyclists.

Options	Responses	Percentages
Strongly Agreed	47	39.16
Agreed	34	28.33
Disagreed	20	16.67
Strongly disagreed	10	8.34
No response	9	7.5
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

From the analysis above it is deductible that a larger proportion of the respondents (39.16%) affirmed that the operations of commercial cyclist on the intra-urban routes has aided the increment in the level of criminal attacks within Ibadan city, This is a thought-provoking response as it cast serious doubts on whatsoever

coloration to the chances of being victim of attack by criminals parading themselves as commercial motorcyclists.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

In the rapidly urbanizing environment of the twenty-first century the issue of integrated transport system in Ibadan city (and other Nigerian major cities) is inevitable. There is an urgent need to evolve policies that are in sync with the reality on ground. The total ban being imposed by some state governments on the operations of the commercial cyclist may in the long run proved counter-productive if adequate substitutes are not provided. The advent of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Lagos city though still a novel is proving a worthy alternative, nevertheless some stakeholders are of the opinion that cost may be a deterrent to a successful replica of it in cities less prosperous than Lagos. Transport is demand driven and it enjoys a symbiotic relationship with socio-economic development. It is pertinent; therefore, that policy on transport infrastructures development in our urban centres should incorporate relevant economic indices of development including employment opportunities and accelerated socio-infrastructure development.

There is also a need for a paradigm shift in the land-use planning, traffic planning and operations that require traffic control especially in the design of new lay-outs, researches have shown that different land-uses places differing demands upon the highway network. It is therefore imperative that transportation policy must take into account the physical, social and economic characteristics of a given area. There is a need for a sustainable effort on poverty reduction in Nigeria. Provision of trishaws (Keke Napep) as alternatives to commercial motorcycles and as a means of fighting urban poverty may not be a long term solution. Crime will thrive in any environment where poverty is endemic and so the provision of job opportunities and enabling environment that will guarantee sustainable economic development is needful.

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