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THE ROLE OF COMMERCIAL MOTORCYCLIST ON ECONOMIC GROWTH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: AKURE TOWNSHIP IN FOCUS

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Abstract:

The operation of commercial motorcycles contributes to the living standard of the operators and the nation in developing countries like Nigeria. A total number of 1,530 structured questionnaires were administered to members of the Amalgamated of Motorcycle Owners and Riders Association of Nigeria (ACCOMORAN) in Akure. The respondents were surveyed using triangulation sampling technique based on the consideration to examine at least half (50%) of the total study population; 1,343(65.8%) questionnaires were retrieved for data analysis.

The study found that daily income of commercial motorcycle operators varies depending on individual efficiency (32%), aggressiveness (16%) and duration of operations (42%). The highest average daily income made by the Okada operators ranges from N3,000 (\$10) and above, while 70.1% of the riders made a minimum of ₦1,600 (\$5.3) daily. Thus, the Okada operators get more than a monthly minimum wage of ₦18,000 (\$60) being paid to the Nigerian government workers. This further justify why the government worker augment their salary by operating Okada after closing from their various offices. The study therefore concludes that commercial motorcycle operations have the ability to improve the standard of living in Akure. Traffic education measure and traffic law enforcement that will encourage good driving behavior is recommended.

Key word: *Capital income, Motorcycle, Aggressiveness, Traffic Education, Enforcement*

1 INTRODUCTION

Motorcycles are two-wheeled vehicles powered by an engine. Its engines range from 50cc (cubic centimeters) to 2294cc. The two-wheel motorcycles belong to Class IV of the classes of para-transit vehicles that operate informally with variable routes and schedules [2]. There are also three-wheelers vehicles which include small taxis such as the auto-rickshaws of India and Sri Lanka; baby taxis of Bangladesh; Tuk-tuks of Thailand; Tempos of Bangladesh; Nepal and India and; Keke NAPEP of Nigeria. However, the two-wheelers are mostly used for personal transportation in developed cities, but for public transportation in many developing cities of Asia and Africa.

Transportation is a process that involves the movement of commuters, goods and services from a given point of origin to a specific destination [7], it determines the regional patterns of development, economic viability, environmental impacts and maintenance of socially acceptable levels of quality of life. It is a means to access business activities, education, employment and recreational opportunities, thus contributing to policy effectiveness and enhancement of security through reduced isolation as well as providing job opportunities (World Bank, 2002). Transport can also play a significant role in territories as well as in promoting regional cooperation (through the flow of people and goods along the import–export corridors of neighboring countries. Precisely, transport development is central in the developmental process for the economy and society to grow healthily. Transport influences and it is influenced by other sectors that make up, not only the total urban system but the entire human settlements system [12].

In Akure, the traffic composition is mixed comprising of motorcycles, taxis, minibuses, Lorries and trucks (trailers). It is dominated by taxis, motorcycles (Okadas) and minibuses, in the study by [9], 49.82% of the vehicle sample is car/taxi, 39.87% are motorcycle, and 9.37% are buses, while 2axle-load and 3axle-load are 0.73% and 0.21% respectively. Thus, passenger cars and motorcycles are the dominant mode of transportation. The Okada operators charge a minimum of fifty naira (\$0.17) per drop per person for a maximum distance of 3 km; however, the charges may increase if the distance and the number of passengers increase. Several people namely youths, employed and unemployed, middle age, literate and illiterate, artisan are engaged in Okada business as a means of livelihood. Since Okada business provide a daily source of regular income for the operators, many people including the gainfully employed are engaged in the business to argument their salary. Also, nonpayment of salaries and irregular income lured people to the business. This paper evaluates the impact of commercial motorcyclist on the economic growth of Akure, a typical urban setting in Nigeria.

Transportation has played a significant role by facilitating trade, commerce, conquest, and social interaction, while consuming a considerable portion of time and resources. The primary need for transportation has been economic, involving personal travel in search of food or work, travel for the exchange of goods and commodities, exploration, personal fulfillment, and the improvement of a society or a nation. The movements of people and goods, which is the basis of transportation, has been undertaken to accomplish those basic tasks that require transfer from one location to another. Tapping natural resources and markets and maintaining a competitive edge over other regions and nations are linked closely to the quality of the transportation system. According to [8], transportation is important for the development of any society. It facilitates the movement of people, allows for optimum utilization of resources and provides access to areas hitherto inaccessible. Without efficient and effective transportation system, to transport manufactured goods and raw materials and without technical know-how, a country is unable to maximize the comparative advantage it may have in the form of natural or human resources.

Over the past decade, there has been a significant growth in the use of motorcycles as a commercial public transport mode. Though, commercial motorcycle service growth has also led to an increase in road accidents, traffic management problems, pervasive noise and increases in local air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions; it offer transport advantages in the form of easy maneuverability, ability to travel on poor roads, and demand responsiveness. [8] affirmed that “the collapse of public intra-city transport system paved way for the rise of motorcycles as means of public transportation in most Nigerian towns and cities”. Although motorcycles have advantages as aforementioned, with their growing importance, it also present some disadvantages to the user such as non adherences to safety as contained in the traffic laws and regulations, lack of training and licensing, health and environmental (air and noise) problems among others. [5] identified factors influencing growth of motorcycle as presented in Table 1.0

Table 1.0: Factors Influencing Growth of Motorcycles

Positive		Negative	Push	Pull
Demand	Supply			
Time savings Door to door service Improve mobility Easy access Demand responsive Easy maneuverability Employment generation/increase in income	Easy availability Limited space	Congestion Pollution Accidents Safety/crime unregulated	Urban sprawl Poor secondary road network Poor road quality Low density Uncontrolled growth Absence of safe, secure, affordable alternatives (especially for woman)	Inexpensive Easy credit High unemployment Low car ownership unregulated

Source: [5]

Nigeria, like other developing countries is confronted with transportation problem including road congestion and road accidents. One of the ways to solve the problem is the use of motorcycle as a means of transportation which is widely used in her villages and cities and Akure in particular. Several studies have been done on the use of motorcycles as means of public transportation in Nigeria. [6] conducted a study on the use of motorcycle as a means of public passenger traffic in Yola town, Adamawa State. The study identified economic depression and inadequate transport facilities as factors that gave rise to the use of motorcycles as means of public transportation in Nigeria. [1] also focused on the evolution of motorcycles for public transportation in Ibadan. He examined the socio-economic profiles of motorcycle operators, the characteristics of public motorcycles operations and the impact of motor bikes on passengers especially in terms of fares and safety. [3] observed that motorcycles have many advantages over taxis and buses because it conveys passengers to places that taxis and buses cannot get to.

In another study carried out by [3] on the factors affecting the daily profits of commercial motorcycle operators in Akure, the capital of Ondo State; he concluded that the major factor responsible for the continuous prominence of commercial motorcycles in Nigeria is the relentless drive by operators to make good profits every day. [10] observed that commercial motorcycling have attracted people from different occupation such as artisans, unemployed graduates, dropped out students, retirees, and retrenched workers as another source of livelihood. Similarly, [4] submitted that numbers of people in commercial motorcycling rose as

a result of capitalist reforms stemming from the Structural Adjustment Programme that led to pauperization of the majority population, with 65% of Nigeria population falling below the poverty line. Thus, commercial motorcycling economy is conceived as an alternative means for family survival and sustenance in Nigeria. [11] examined factors influencing artisans switching to commercial motorcycling in Edo State Nigeria; the study revealed that lack of patronage of locally made products, stress, inadequate and decaying infrastructure and the quick money-making syndrome among Nigerians were the factors responsible for artisans switching to commercial motorcyclists.

Commercial Motorcycle as a Means of Intra-city Transport in Akure

Intra-city transport in most Nigerian cities was essentially through the use of taxis and medium sized buses before the emergence of commercial motorcycle. [8] affirm that a major factor that was responsible for the decline in the number of commercial vehicles in Nigeria since 1980 was the high cost of procuring the vehicles. The economic depression in Nigeria in the early 1980s resulted in a sharp increase in the prices of basic commodities including automobiles. As a result of this, many motor transport operators could no longer afford to invest in the procurement of new vehicles. Some of the operators resorted to the use of imported second hand vehicles known as *Tokunbo* which were equally expensive and in some cases unserviceable. The economic depression of the 1980s thus set the stage for the introduction of an affordable means of intra-city transport, which was found in the use of motorcycles.

In Akure, though the use of motorcycle as a mode of transport comes with its challenges such as motorcycle accidents involving fatalities; environmental and public health concerns from the emissions; non-compliance to motor traffic regulations like the use of helmet; the high incidence of commercial motorcycle use has been contributing significantly to the betterment of many livelihoods of her residents, by providing employment opportunities for both the unemployed and employed. It also solves the mobility problems especially those living in the core areas where the roads are not motorable. The use of commercial motorcycle was affirmed by [9]; that 39.87% of the vehicle samples are motorcycle. Figure 1.0 is the land use map of Akure showing the commercial motorcycle (Okada) parks, while Figure 2.0 shows cross section of commercial motorcyclist operators waiting to convey their passengers to the inner core of Apatapiti Layout (a high density zone of the study area).

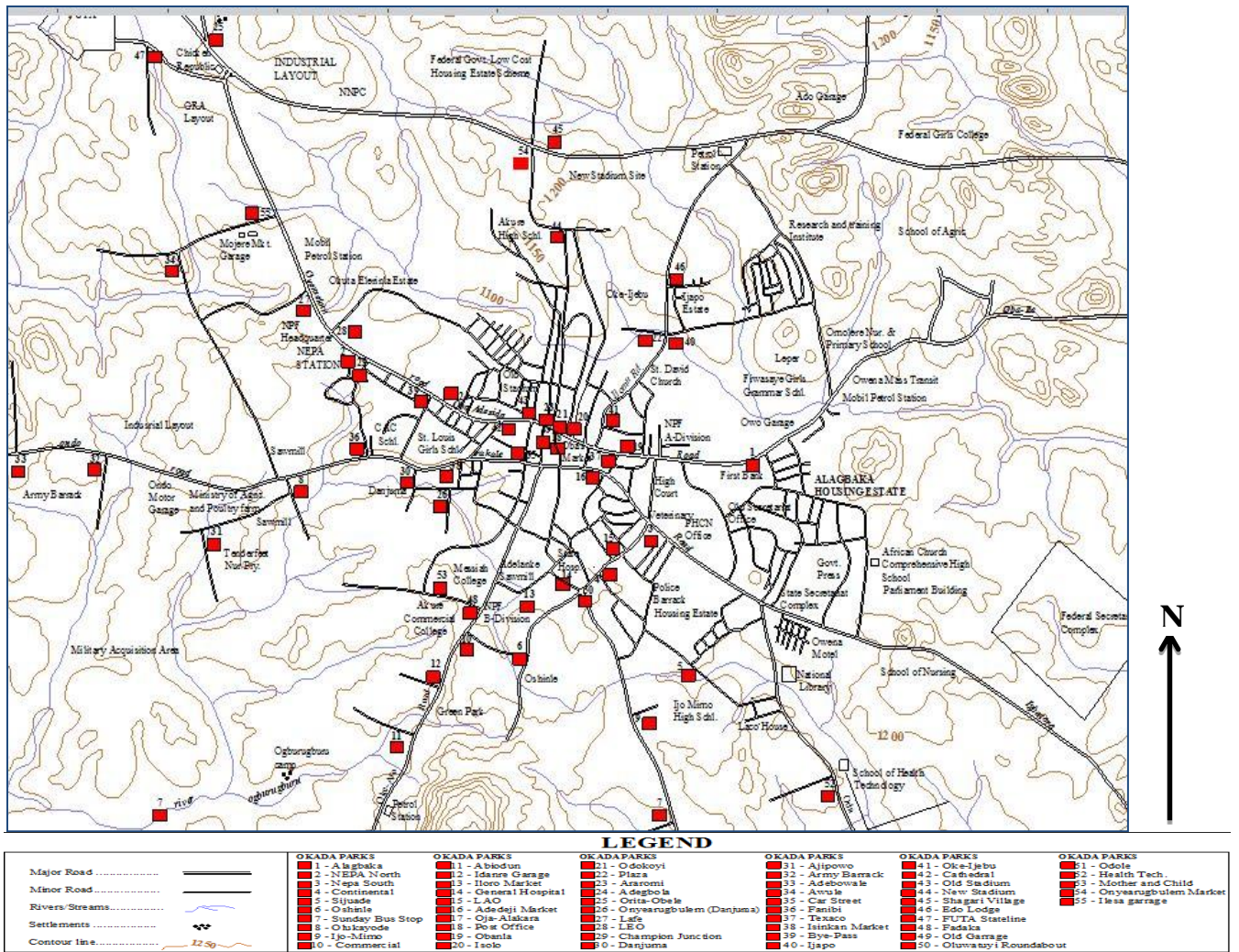


Fig. 1: Land Use Map of Akure Showing the Commercial Motorcycle (Okada) Parks



Fig. 2: Commercial Motorcyclist Operators Waiting Passengers

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Reconnaissance surveys were carried out throughout the cities to identify various motorcycle parks and to examine the behavior of operators and users. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted, based on information from field surveys and desk research. Primary data was collected from cross-sectional surveys of motorcycle operators, officials of Amalgamated of Motorcycle Owners and Riders Association of Nigeria (ACCOMORA) and end users of their services.

The population of the study covered all classes of registered commercial motorcyclist, both full-time and part-time operators. The calculation for sample size was based on the consideration to examine at least half (50%) of the total study population. The questionnaire consist of questions with options from which respondents are expected to pick response as applicable (close-ended) and questions which allow respondents to freely express their opinion on the subject matter (open-ended), A total of 1,530 respondent were served with questionnaires which represents 75% of the total population selected through triangulation of sampling methods and cuts across all the selected units from each parks.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age of motorcycle rider: Results of socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents as presented in Table 2.0 shows that 745 (55.3%) respondents are between the ages of 21 and 30, 260 (19.3%) are between 31 and 40 years, 216 (16.0%) are under 20 years of age, while 88 (6.5%) were in the age bracket of 41 to 50 years and a small fraction of respondents fall within 51 years and above which is 34 (2.5%). Thus, commercial motorcycle riders between the ages of 21 to 30 years represent the predominant age group of commercial motorcycle riders in the study area. Figure 3.0 and Figure 4.0 shows the marital status of the respondent and the educational status of respondent respectively.

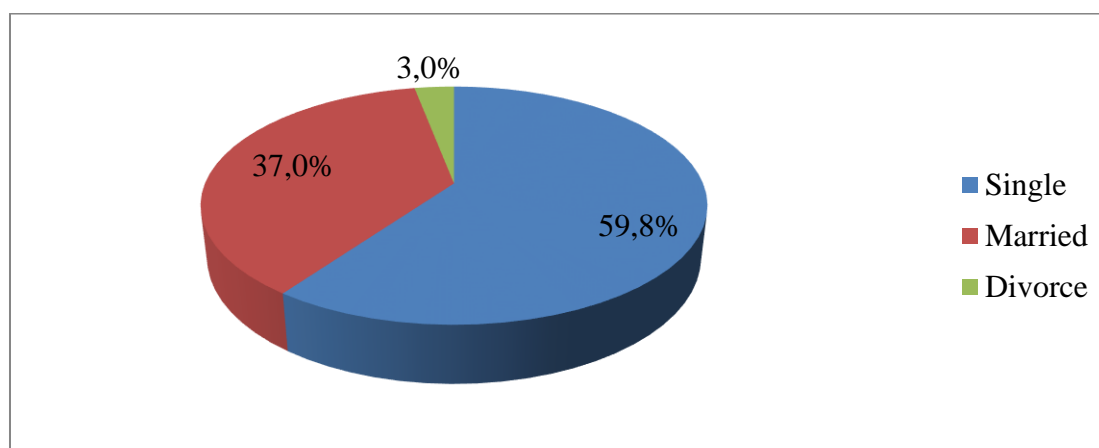


Fig. 3: Marital Status of the Respondent

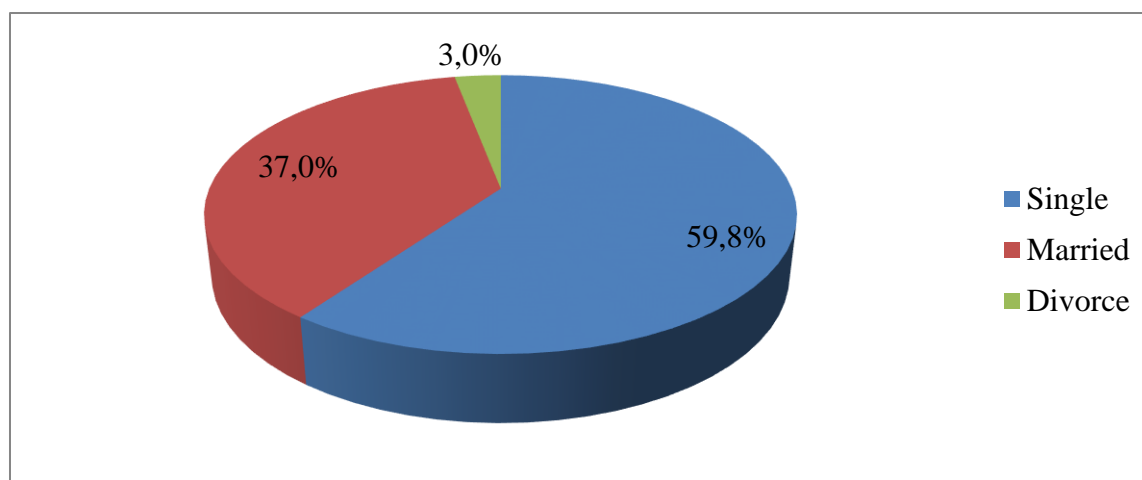


Fig. 4: Educational Status of the Respondent

Sex distribution of the motorcycle rider: Analysis of the sex distribution of the respondents showed that the commercial motorcycles riders are male dominance with a total of 1337 (99.62%) while 6 (0.38%) are females.

The average daily income: The highest average daily income made by the Okada operators ranges from N3,000 (\$10) and above, while 70.1% of the riders made a minimum of ₦1,600 (\$5.3) daily. Thus, the Okada operators get more than a monthly minimum wage of N18,000 (\$60) being paid to government workers. The amount made per day depends on the efficiency of the motorcycle, aggressiveness of the riders and the period of operation. However, the commercial motorcycle riders made good income from this mode of transportation which account for why the business is attracting many people especially the drop-out and young school leavers.

Tab. 2: Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of Respondent

Group	Age (years)	Sex		Average Daily Income (₦)
	Proportion/Percentage	Male	Female	
< 20	216(16.08%)	216 (100%)	0(0%)	500 – 1,000 (4.0%)
21-30	745 (55.47%)	741(99.46%)	04(0.25%)	1,100-1,500 (46.8%)
31-40	260 (19.36%)	358 (99.23%)	02(0.13%)	1,600–2,000 (23.3%)
41-50	88 (6.55%)	88 (100%)	0 0%)	3,100–3,500 (16.4%)
51and above	34 (2.53%)	34 (100%)	0(0%)	3,600–4,000 (9.5%)
Total	1343(100%)	1,337 (99.62%)	06 (0.38%)	

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study found that daily income of commercial motorcycle operators varies depending on individual efficiency which represents 32%, aggressiveness (16%) and duration of operations (42%). The highest average daily income made by the Okada operators ranges from N3,000 and above, while 70.1% of the riders made a minimum of N1,600 daily. Thus, the

Okada operators get more than a monthly minimum wage of N18,000 (\$60) being paid to government workers. This further justify why the government worker augment their salary by operating Okada after closing from their various offices. The study therefore concludes that commercial motorcycle operations have the ability to improve the standard of living in Akure. Traffic education measure and traffic law enforcement that will encourage good driving behavior is recommended.

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