



BAN ON ALCOHOLIC DRINK SALES IN MOTOR PARKS: FACTS AGAINST ITS WORKABILITY IN ROAD ACCIDENT PREVENTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This review scrutinized the accident situations in Nigeria, which precipitated the Federal Government's ban on sales of alcoholic drinks in all motor parks and factors that negatively affected the workability of the ban in preventing road accidents among commercial drivers. These were with a view to providing guidelines for effective future safety policy implementation in Nigeria. The ban was ineffective as a result of poor enlightenment about the programme, lack of enforcement, lack of evaluation, assessment reports and follow-up. The research concluded that safety policies and programmes such as the ban could be an impetus for accident prevention, if these issues are addressed. Also, empirical researches to evaluate such programmes are suggested.

Keywords: ban, alcohol drinks, accident, drivers

1. Introduction

The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) was established through Decree No. 45 of 1988 as amended by Decree 35 of 1992, and referred to in the Statute books as the FRSC Act cap 141 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN) and passed by the National Assembly as the FRSC (establishment) Act in 2007. The commission was charged with the responsibilities of regulating and coordinating all activities of motorists on all public roads across Nigeria, with the mission of reducing road crash deaths and injuries by

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50% by 2020. This development was prompted in order to combat the rising trends of road accidents in the country. In their review, Atubi (2015) and Agwubike (2004) found that the Nigeria Traffic Laws confer wide powers on the FRSC, which by Decree 45 was not only given the power to arrest and prosecute traffic offenders, but also make regulations concerning road safety matters.

As part of its many strategies to accomplish its mission therefore, the FRSC instituted a ban on alcohol sales in and around all motor parks in Nigeria. The ban was attested by Eze (2012) and Samson (2012). The ban on alcohol sales in motor parks in Nigeria became very necessary at that time for several reasons; that are discussed in this column:

- a. High rate of vehicular accidents in Nigeria:** The rate of accidents and especially those involving commercial vehicles in the country soared. On comparative basis, researchers found that out of the four main modes of travelling, road travel presented the highest risks in most countries than air, rail, and marine. Ekikhamenor & Agwubike (2004) regretted that the rate at which accidents especially the traffic ones take place in Nigeria was not only alarming, but catastrophic. In the same vein, Atubi (2012) found that in Nigeria, a five-fold increase in traffic-related fatalities was observed over the last 30 years and that the country recorded as many as 18,494 cases of road accidents between 2001 and 2006, thereby placing it among the fore-front nations experiencing the highest rate of road tragedy in the world (Alani, 2012). In conformation, Adekoya, Adepoju & Owoeye (2011) found that as many as 83 (20%) of the commercial drivers they used had involved in motor vehicle accident in the past 10 years and 70 (20.5%) of those who had accidents had been involved more than once. Even among official drivers, Bekibebe, Fawole, Bamgboye, Adekunle, Ajayi & Baiyeroju (2001) found an accident rate of 11.1%. It is doubted whether or not there has been changes in this trend.
- b. Enormous effects of vehicular accidents:** The medical, legal and economic implications of road crashes for the victims, their families as well as the nation are enormous and called for workable strategies like the ban on alcohol sales in motor parks to be put in place. Researchers like Fouracre & Jacob (1976); Eze and Downing (2012) and World Health Organization-WHO (2015) estimated that the cost of accidents in developing countries is 1.2% of a country's GNP per annum, as a result of morbidity, mortality and property-related costs. The health implications of accidents range from short-term illness to more serious and irreparable cases of death. Accident statistics as obtained from the FRSC indicated that in 2007, road crashes was 8.477 of which 50% were fatal, 17,794 people were injured, 4,637 lost their lives. In 2014, 35% traffic accidents were reported (South African National Injury, Mortality Surveillance System, 2016).

The Head of Commission was reported to have approximated deaths from crashes to 400 people each month excluding deaths that were not registered, because, Atubi (2012) revealed that police in Nigeria only record crashes with immediate fatalities, making their data under-estimate the true magnitude of road fatalities. According to Ehikhamenor & Agwubike (2004) and WHO (2015), death and damaged goods worth thousands of naira are lost in accidents. In a nutshell, Cancer for Management Deveipment (1999) summarised the effects of accidents in these words accidents wrecks lives, lowers production, increases costs and affects morale.

c. Strong relationship existing between human errors and accident causation:

The FRSC ban on alcohol sales in motor parks at that time was not out of place because, Aworeni & Alawode (2009); Atubi (2009); Adeyeye (2010) and Ekenedo (2010) all established such relationship. According to Aworeni & Alawode (2009) and WHO (2015), 90% of accidents in Nigeria can be attributed to drivers errors. This statistics was earlier found by Atubi (2004), who estimated that human errors accounted for 64-95% of all causes of traffic crashes in developing countries. No wonder, why Kumven, the Sector Commander of the FRSC in Ekiti State, blamed many auto-crashes in the country on human errors. These reports were however not synonymous with the finding of Bekibele, et. al. (2007) who found human error, as an insignificant factor in accident causation. Though it is agreed that there are environmental and mechanical errors relating to accidents, yet if the human factor (driver) is careful enough, most accidents that occurred due to environmental or mechanical factors would have been prevented. The SHELL Model of accident causation as presented by Ayodele, (2004) indicated ignorance, carelessness, flouting safety rules, physical defects of and importantly alcohol drinking by drivers as precipitating life-ware agents in accidents Bekibele, et. al. (2007) and Guohua, Joane & Qixuan, (2013) shared the same view.

d. Strong link established between drunkenness and human errors: The fact that drivers' drunkenness is a major factor responsible for human errors, made the ban on alcohol sales in motor-parks very necessary. It was documented that alcohol use was second to cigarette use among long distance vehicle drivers (Makanjuola, Oyeleke & Akande (2008). It was also established that alcohol impairs the driver, making him susceptible to preventable mistakes while driving. In fact, it was estimated that 50% of crashes on Nigeria roads are related to alcohol use by the drivers International Council on Alcohol, Drugs & Traffic Safety-ICADTS (2012) reported that of 1,490 cases in their study, impairment from alcohol was a major contributing factor to crash causation in 274 (18.4%) cases. Also, more than 40% of the drivers who were alcohol impaired have incurred at least one previous road infringement.

In their review, Kehinde & Adegoke (2012) and Atubi (2015) concurred that alcohol has an important effect on drivers' behaviours and performances and that these effects increase as the Breath Alcohol Concentration (BAC) level increases. The authors reiterated that cognitive and sensory functions, which are necessary for skillful driving, could be impaired with alcohol use and that alcohol impairment comes much earlier before drunkenness or intoxication becomes evident. In their submission, Adekoya, et. al. (2011) said that alcohol is a central nervous system depressant, which is capable of causing impairment of mental and motor functions, both of which are critical to the performance of the driver. The authors further stressed that drunkenness affects judgment of speed, distance and risk, diplopia and blurred vision. In addition, Dumbili (2012) & WHO (2016) found that alcohol impairs the ability to be sober, which is prerequisite for driving and safe journey.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration-NHTSA (2012) outlined common misbehaviours upon, which an intoxicated driver can be suspected and accosted as including; weaving, almost striking objects/vehicle, turning with wide radius, swerving, too slow speed, stopping without a cause, drifting, following too closely, braking erratically, tyres on center or land marker, driving into opposing/crossing traffic, signaling inconsistent with driving actions, turning abruptly or illegally, accelerating or decelerating rapidly, driving with head light off, appearing to be drunk, straddling center or lane marker and driving on undesignated roadway.

e. Uncontrolled accessibility of commercial drivers to alcohol: The ban on alcohol sales in motor parks was pertinent in order to stop the ease with which, the commercial drivers access alcohol through the sales outlets in their parks. Many researchers including; Abiona, Aloba & Fatoye (2006), Adekoya, et al. (2011); Olokesusi (2011) Oluwadiya & Akinola (2012) and Aditjat & Ritura (2015) agreed that commercial drivers in Nigeria access alcohol right in their motor parks. For instance, Kehinde & Adegoke (2012) attested that paraga outlets are located either in or near motor parks in their Osogbo study location, where commercial drivers and cyclists have easy access to them, while Adekoya, et.al. (2011) personally observed that drinks in forms of beer, gin, palm wine are available in some motor parks. In fact, Olokesusi (2011) presented snap shots of drinks freely displayed on tables and drivers having their drinking spree at a motor park at Ibadan.

Types of alcohol drinks sold in motor parks include all the three main kinds of alcoholic beverages; beers (3%-8% alc); wines (8%-12%) and distilled spirits such as whisky, gin, vodka (40-50%). Others are traditional beverages such as palm wine, paraga, shepe (Kehinde & Adegoke, 2012); burukutu, pito (3.6%), ogogoro (native gin) or kai-kai (Karieh, 2003) also known as sapele water.

2.2 Prevalence of Alcohol Drinking by Commercial Vehicle Drivers

For religious, age, cultural and health reasons, a large non-drinking population exists in Nigeria, despite this, WHO's (2004) world ranking showed that Nigeria is one of the 30 nations with highest per capita alcohol consumption level worldwide. Both Gureje, et al (2007) and WHO, (2016) attested that alcohol is the most commonly used drug and that heavy episodic drinking rather than moderate drinking is common among users in Nigeria. The high rate of drinking by drivers is attributable to their proximity to alcohol outlets among other factors (ICADTS, 2012). A research conducted in Port Harcourt and Ile-Ife by Abiona, et al. (2006) showed that the prevalence rate of drinking by commercial drivers was 67.2% and out of the drinking drivers, 47% were heavy users, 15.3% were moderate users, while 37.7% were mild/occasional users. It was also found that majority (74.5%) of the drivers reported drinking after work, while only 1.9% reported drinking during work and that only 13.5% drank in the morning. These findings contradicted Kehinde & Adegoke (2012), who found that majority of paraga vendors started their sales at motor parks as early as 6.00am and that by 8.00am, all of them had begun selling and that they make their brisk sales in the morning. Adekoya, et. al. (2011) confirmed that 99 (24.8%) drivers in their study consumed alcohol and cigarette regularly, while as many as 63% of paraga sellers said that they have been seeing people get drunk with paraga.

2.3 Reasons Why Drivers Use Alcohol

As stated by Kehinde & Adegoke (2012), driver's beliefs in the curative effects of an extra-ordinary range of ailments might have been the reason for using paraga, but Adekoya, et.al. (2011) submitted that long distance drivers who are usually under more stress use alcohol to reduce such stress. Additionally, Abiona, et al. (2006) found that frustration that is associated with driving tops the list of reasons adduced for drinking and that age bears relevance to current drinking. In actual sense, drinking and driving habits were linked to the persuasive perception and general notion that alcohol helps them to 'shine their eyes' that is, to be alert while driving.

2.4 Drunk-Driving Situation among Commercial Vehicle Drivers in Nigeria

Drunk-driving according to NHTSA (2012) is the act of operating or driving a motor vehicle, while under the influence of alcohol or drugs to the degree that mental and motor skills are impaired. It is also called by any of the following names: Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol (DUI); Driving While Intoxicated (DWI); Operating While Impaired (OWI) or Operating a Vehicle under the Influence (OVI). Worldwide, drunk-driving is a criminal offence which attracts varying degree of penalties. In Nigeria,

drunk-driving is a serious problem and ICADTS (2012) estimated that between 60% and 70% of commercial drivers engage in drinking and driving. Adekoya, et al. (2011) had reasons to conclude that drivers in Nigeria drive under influence, because they found in their review that the blood alcohol level of drivers involved in road accidents was high. In Lagos State, out of 2,500 commercial drivers tested for drugs and drunkenness, 441 (17.64%) were positive to drugs and alcohol, whereas, drunk-driving was found to positively correlate with drivers involvement in fatal accidents (WHO, 2002; Anderson, et.al., 2009; NHTSA, 2012; WHO, 2016). It was also estimated that drivers with BAC of 0.10% are six to twelve times more likely to get into a fatal crash or injury than those with no alcohol. It was however stressed that a major reason for high rate of drunk-driving in Nigeria is that the country lacks a legal maximum BAC making it difficult to prosecute individuals for impaired driving.

2.5 How could the Ban have affected Alcohol Use and Accident Reduction?

If the ban on alcohol sales in motor parks in Nigeria had been effectively implemented, it could have helped in reducing alcohol use rate and accident reduction on Nigeria roads in many ways:

1. Drivers' access to alcohol especially during work hours would have been drastically reduced or completely removed.
2. If the reasons for the ban are well disseminated to the drivers, they would have been more enlightened on risks of drunk-driving and especially accidents.
3. When alcohol drinking is eliminated, drivers' are likely to have better control of their vehicles, because drunk-driving has been associated with poor vehicle control.
4. Health-related issues experienced after alcohol consumption like; headache, blurred, vision and drowsiness interfering with good driving would have been eliminated.
5. Traffic misbehaviors like beating the traffic light, not respecting pedestrian crossing and many others that can cause accidents would have been put to check.
6. Drivers would have been able to conserve money to maintain their vehicles instead of expending it on excessive drinking, thereby preventing accidents that might occur due to poor vehicle maintenance or mechanical faults.
7. Drivers would have been having enough rest periods between trips instead of filling their resting times at their parks with non-beneficial activities like alcohol drinking.

2.6 Issues springing from the Ban on Alcohol Sales in Nigeria Motor-parks

Today, Nigerians are reaching conclusions that ban or no ban on alcohol sales, accident still occur in great numbers as before. This however translates to the fact that the ban is not in any way effective, an opinion confirmed by Samson (2004). However, before making such conclusions, some facts need to be scrutinized and some questions need to be answered.

- Before the said ban was instituted, were the drivers (either in the rural or urban) enlightened on the ban? Do they know what they, their families and the nation stand to benefit? What forms of enlightenment were they given? Who provided enlightenment? How regularly was enlightenment provided?
- After the ban was instituted, more questions still arose on compliance. By Nigeria standard, the language understood when it comes to compliance with rules is **force**. Was the ban enforced? If so, who enforced it? What penalty? Were the alcohol sellers carried along? How firm was the enforcement? Were problems such as; favoritism, bribery and corruption stemmed in the course of enforcing the ban? Today, mere observations at many motor parks in Nigeria, show that alcohol sales in them is far from being banned, because not only are large varieties of alcoholic drinks sold, but sellers cluster in great numbers in the parks at both rural and urban centres. Also, alcohol hawkers go in and out of the parks to make their sales without restriction. Those who are supposed to enforce the regulation are found patronizing the alcohol sellers as they transit from town to town via the parks. How many of the supposed ban enforcement agents are ever motivated to carry out such dangerous assignments of enforcing a regulation on very diabolic and fetish local population. Motivation here is not only limited to monetary issues alone like salary increase etc but extends to provision of enabling environments, protection, facilities and equipment as needed by those empowered to enforce the ban. Many times regulations are seemingly enforced at the outset, only for it to be completely relaxed and eventually go into oblivion as time passes and new governments are put in place. Suffice to say that, it is one thing to set a regulation and another thing to effect it.
- (c) Given the facts that laws, have been made and even enforced, the need to assess and re-assess the programme to confirm its effectiveness is obvious. Assessment will help to ascertain the efficacy of the project. In the Nigeria situation regarding alcohol ban in motor parks, since it was instituted, has any assessment to confirm its workability been carried out? How many of such studies are available? How regularly are the studies carried out? Who did the researches? Where are the reports? Even if there are reports, have they been

followed up? The answers to all these questions are obviously not there to make reference to. These are some of the obvious issues rendering the ban ineffective in reducing road accidents.

3. Conclusions and Recommendation

On the basis of this review, it was concluded that instituting ban on alcohol sales in motor parks could have been an antidote to road accident prevention, if it had been truthfully enforced, evaluated, reported and followed up. Therefore, the following recommendations are made for future programmes:

1. Public enlightenment before bans are instituted: Drivers, alcoholic drink hawkers, shops owners and the community must be carried along.
2. Good enforcement programme, reinforced by selection of honest officials, good equipment, proper remuneration and super protection of officials will ensure compliance.
3. Regular evaluation of the ban to identify its successes, and weaknesses.
4. Evaluation results should be reported and followed up promptly.
5. More academic researches on accident and safety on the road, which provide baseline accident statistics is recommended
6. Empirical study comparing accident statistics among drivers in ban-compliant and non-compliant motor parks in various parts of Nigeria should be carried out.

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