



## SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF COMMERCIAL MOTORCYCLE OPERATORS IN YABA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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### **Abstract:**

This study investigates the survival strategies of commercial motorcycle operators in Yaba local government area of Lagos State. Especially, the intent of the study is to ascertain the relationship between unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, acquisition of formal education and engagement in okada business. The study utilized data generated from Cross-Sectional Survey and In-Depth interviews. The population for the survey consists of registered Commercial Motorcycle Operators in eleven pick up points. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane and Chi square statistical tool was used to test the stated hypothesis. Finding revealed that there is significant and positive relationship that exists between unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, acquisition of formal education and youth engagement in okada business. The study concluded that it is obvious in the data analysis of the study that Commercial Motorcycle Operation in the study area was central to economic sustenance of the operators as a source of empowerment and as a means of poverty reduction among the operators. The study therefore recommended that the central motivation for engagement in okada business is unemployment and infrastructural constraints such as irregular electric power supply. To reduce the spate of Commercial Motorcycle Operation, there should be provision of job opportunities for youths and regular power supply for sustainable growth of business and industry. Government should assist Okada Riders with the acquisition of skills that would make them employable or become self-employed.

**Keywords:** unemployment, infrastructure, formal education, survival strategies, okada business

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## **1. Introduction**

The operation of commercial motorcycle cannot be entirely separated from the concept of public transportation in modern day Nigeria. In recent time, commercial motorcycle has assumed important position at the level of meeting people's need for transportation, particularly in strategic places of urban centers and rural areas. It is important to point that in some decades ago motorcycle was dominantly used for personal purpose other than commercial. Thus, the major means of public commercial transportation were bus, streetcars, light rail, heavy rail, commuter rail, automated guided transit, and ferry (Filani, 1974). Though some of the aforementioned public transportation systems such as light rail, automated guided transit do not exist in Nigeria for use, it can be stated that motorcycle had little or no impact for commercial transportation during the mid-twentieth century (Omoyibo, 2000).

Okada began to gain popularity in the late eighties (1980s) when because of economic difficulties in the last years of the first decade of the Nigerian economic crunch, some jobless youths began to use this age-old transport system for commercial purposes, to transport some stranded but willing passengers through the narrow or bad roads to the far inaccessible parts of the cities or villages. Commercial motorcycle is one of the chief modes of transport in Nigeria and, by far, the most common form of informal transport system in the country. It is affordable for the common man and very flexible.

According to Lele (1990), it is estimated that over seventy percent (70%) of the Nigerian youths, graduates inclusive, are either unemployed or underemployed. In order to sustain existence, many of these youths ventured into different economic activities one of which is okada business. In this wise, the increasing importance of okada business as source of commercial transportation will be perceived in terms of economic empowerment for the operators. The significant aspect of this argument is that operation of the business is not only limited to illiterates, individuals of enviable academic qualifications are also actively involved (NEEDS, 2005). This is to say that okada business is an integral part of the economic system, which helps to create jobs for numerous citizens.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The prevailing situation in the Nigeria transportation sector is such that the role of commercial motorcycle is increasingly significant. This argument can be sustained from different perspectives. It is obvious that commercial motorcycle has become a source of career and employment for considerable proportion of Nigerian population. Particularly, in recent time many societies of the world are faced with problem of unemployment, African continent being the worst hit of the structural problem (Onokerhoraye, 1981).

Commercial motorcycle riding in Nigeria in general and Lagos State in particular, has become popular in recent years for a number of reasons. Prominent reason for the development is the high rate of unemployment in the country. Many people were forced into the business as a ready means of keeping body and soul together. Otherwise, it is ordinarily not an attractive way to earn a livelihood, considering the obvious risks associated with the business, especially in a busy metropolis like Lagos. The popularity and widespread acceptance of Okada has rapidly risen in recent years. It has become a regular means of transportation for the young and old, man and woman. Unfortunately, the rise of Okada has been accompanied by increased levels of high-risk behaviour and accident on Nigerian roads, as a result they have come under heavy flak culminating in legislations restricting or prohibiting their operations in some Nigerian cities (Oluwadiya et al., 2004). In the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, Ikeja, alone, a total of 179 accident cases were recorded in October and November 2011; and of this number, 170 involved okada passengers. Okada operators also featured prominently in traffic law violations. For instance, within a space of two months (October and November 2011), there were about 2, 911 cases recorded involving Okada riders in the state.

- In recent years, commercial motorcycle operators have come to bridge the huge public transport gap in most cities across the country. However, this is not without the dangers they pose to themselves, passengers and to other road users. It is claimed that some of these Okada riders operate under the influence of drugs and other substances (Cervero, 2005). Despite the obvious trends of risks and challenges anchored in the business, there are few community based studies that have investigated the problem in this part of Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated Survival Strategies among Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Yaba area of Lagos State. To achieve this the following questions were raised to guide this study;
- Why do people choose Okada business?
- What are the procedures for recruiting Commercial Motorcycle Operators?
- What are the contributions of Commercial Motorcycle Operators (CMO) to the economic life of the family?
- How is the family life without the Commercial Motorcycle Operators?
- What are the challenges faced by the Commercial Motorcycle Operators?

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

The general motive for embarking on this research is to examine the Survival Strategies among Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Yaba area of Lagos, while the specific objectives are:

- To know the factors that motivates Okada Riders in the business.
- To examine the recruitment modalities among Okada Riders.

- To know the contributions of Commercial Motorcycle Operators (CMOs) to the economic life of the family.
- To examine family life without Commercial Motorcycle Operators.
- To know the challenges faced by the Okada Riders.

#### 4. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Unemployment and poverty are two basic problems plaguing many developing nations of the world (ILO, 2007). High rate of unemployment especially among the youths in developing nations is as prevalent as the rate of underemployed which are the major factors responsible for low standard of living in developing nations. Poverty is therefore widespread both in the cities and urban areas of Nigeria and other developing nations of the world (Amaghionyeodiwe, 2009). Nigeria was known to have been ranked as one of the middle-income, oil-producing countries in the late 1970s, but her ranking plummeted to that of one of the lowest-income countries in the early 1990s (Amaghionyeodiwe, 2009).

Like the case of Ghana, many interventionist policies targeted at the informal sector employment creation (e.g. the National Directorate of Employment) in Nigeria rarely achieve their goals due to official corruption and poor program design and implementation, among other factors (Deborah, 2007).

Thus, in the early 2000's, Ukwu (2002) had to describe Nigeria as *"one of the poorest of the poor among the nations of the world, confronted not just with pockets of poverty, disadvantaged or marginalized areas, groups and individuals but with a situation in which most of the population exists at standards of living below those required for full development and enjoyment of individual and societal well-being."* In her effort to create jobs for the unemployed and promote economic growth, the Government of Nigeria put in place a numbers of economic reform programmes which have very minimal impacts on employment creation, poverty reduction and growth of the national economy (Abiola and Oladeji, 1998; Akinbobola and Saibu, 2004; Amaghionyeodiwe, 2009).

In order to provide themselves with means of support, many of the unemployed have no choice but to exploit the income and self or casual employment opportunities in the informal sector of the economy. The informal sector has thus become a major provider of employment especially in developing and transitional economies (Khotkina, 2007). The types of work available in the informal economy are diverse and multifarious. It stretches from casual and unstable employment like garbage picking, street trading, domestic help, and so on; to self-employment as master-craftsman in any given trade.

Transportation is vital to every human community. One means of transportation in most part of the world is Motorcycle. Lagos State is one of the most developed city in Nigeria, with an area of 356,861 hectares of which 75, 755 hectares are wetlands and a projected population of fifteen million (15million) (Olugbenga, 2011). Commercial Motorcycles (also known as "Okada") are a popular means of transportation especially

for short distance. Its frequent use and patronage is very high because it is faster, convenient and can easily maneuver through the regular traffic jam and get to any destination provided there is road (Banjo et al., 2011).

## **5. The Condition of Transportation in Nigeria**

Rapid urbanization and increasing rate of poverty are among the greatest challenges facing developing countries of the new millennium. This is obvious from the alarming rate of urban population growth, particularly in Nigeria. Indeed, for more than fifty (50) years, the progressive population drift to urban centres in Nigeria have not being matched by corresponding upgrade in infrastructural facilities. In other words, the implication of urban population growth on the economy of developing countries have been described as stagnant and unrewarding (Salau, 1992; Mabogunje, 2002).

Public infrastructure and social services have over the years been overstretched, while the process of urban development and infrastructure overhaul has being insignificant in most cities. In recent time, transportation infrastructure is often viewed by national policy makers as a second tier investment priority, pitted against more immediate, socially oriented poverty reduction programmes. In the face of fiscal pressures, spending on the maintenance of transport infrastructure, let alone on the building of new infrastructure, is often the first to be postponed, if not foregone.

The concomitant effect of population explosion on the urban areas is the inadequacy of transport provision; which has given place to dilapidated roads and very rickety vehicles plying death traps roads. It is common sight to see urban dwellers travelling in over-crowded public transport vehicles, with extremely poor services and unhealthy travel environment. In many Nigerian cities, transport situation have reached a crisis point; the consequences of several years of neglect by succeeding administrations. Hence, there is nothing novel in stating that transportation in Nigeria is grossly inadequate (Filani, 2002). Over three quarter of the households in most Nigerian cities, earn income below poverty lines (Osinubi, 2003). This has affected the rate of procurement of new vehicles, and it is obvious that this trend coupled with the inevitable declining level of existing purchasing power has taken its toll on the mobility needs in Nigeria.

In the last few decades, most people in urban areas have depended heavily on commercial motorcycle for transportation. Poor quality, unaffordable, unsafe, and grossly uncomfortable means of vehicular transportation of people in Nigerian cities pose great threat to the society. Given the acute shortfall in transportation supply, private vehicle ownership is still very low; while, public transport has become more common and transport externalities have become endemic.

The impact of this distressed sector on the economy is severe, with the urban poor population suffering more than any other group. The growing transport paucity has had a serious negative effect on the lives of the people and it has continued to trap and push its catchments towards poorer livelihoods. The most devastating problem has

been the lack of sustainable mobility and frequent deviant driving behaviours as an escape measure. These cumulative effects explain the reasons for high patronage of okada despite its associated risk (Odufunwa et al., 2006).

## **6. Compliance with Road Safety Regulation and Road Crashes**

Road crashes started in Lagos, Nigeria in 1906. Ever since, it has been a major killer in Nigeria (Falope, 1991). The attempt to reduce the number and severity of road crashes necessitated the formulation of road traffic regulations to guide operation, conduct and other issues relating to the road and the road users. There are various categories of road users namely vehicle owners including motorcyclists, and pedestrians. The use of motorcycles for passenger transport gained accelerated momentum in Nigeria after the economic recession of the early 1980s. The economic down turn of the 1980s in Nigeria and the subsequent introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme in 1986 led to cut in employment in both the public sector and the organized private sector thereby leading to an upsurge in the activities and relevance of the informal sector of which motorcycle passenger transport is a part.

The lack of adequate and sustainable public transport and poor urban planning in most Nigerian cities created a transport gap for the motorcycles to fill in passenger transportation. A substantial number of road crashes in Nigeria involve commercial motorcycle operators. Stakeholders have advocated for outright ban on their operations; some called for restrictions; while others blamed the menace on inefficient road traffic law enforcement. The overall goal of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011 – 2020 is to stabilize and then reduce the forecast level of road traffic fatalities around the World by 2020. The activities to achieve the above goal will take place at local, national, regional and global levels (WHO, 2011). At the national level such as in Nigeria, stabilizing and reducing crash injuries from motorcycles will require compliance with road traffic regulations in order to provide direction for enforcement, which is a component of the safe system approach, that is, pillar 4 – safer road users (WHO, 2011). The failure of drivers to comply with basic road safety legislations is the main cause of serious crashes (EC, 2003:17). Compliance in road safety is the act of obedience to rules guiding the usage of the roads by road users. The sequential objectives of these rules are; to avoid conflicts among road users; prevent events that are unpleasant to the road users; and mitigate the effects of the unpleasant events. Non-compliance carries penalty. Penalties as defined by the road traffic regulation agencies differ from country to country. Penalties in road traffic law enforcement, in order of severity, range from; no action, written or verbal warning, fines to prosecution or arrest (Southgate and Mirrlees-Black, 1991; Zaal, 1994). The application of the penalty options have been documented in the literature to effect road user's behaviour in different ways (Williams, et al. 1992; etc).

The main objective of the penalty is to serve as deterrence, that is, prevents non-compliant behaviour. The deterrence mechanism could either be specific or general.

Specific deterrence relates to compliance based on the assumption that road users will be discouraged from committing or exhibiting non-compliant behaviour; while general deterrence relies on the assumption that road users who become aware of the risk of apprehension and punishment adopt compliant behaviour to avoid the consequences of enforcement (Zaal, 1994).

A high compliance rate will lead to improved safety on the roads, *ceteris paribus*, which will in turn reduce the destruction of human and material resources required for economic growth and development. A typical illustration is the case of crash helmet. Wearing it correctly can reduce the risk of fatal or serious head injury by 50 per cent (EC, 2003:24); thereby freeing medical resources, productive man-hour, *et cetera*, which can be deployed for other economic and social advancement of the society. It has been found that medical charges for un-helmeted motorcycle in-patients suffering brain injuries were 2.25 times higher than for those without brain injuries (NHSTA, 1996). Similarly, estimates show that motorcycle helmet use saved US\$ 19.5 billion in economic costs from 1984 through 2002.

It has been estimated that about 1.3 million people died annually as a result of road crashes, over three thousand deaths per day. Ninety per cent of road deaths occur in low and middle income countries, which harbour less than half of the world's registered vehicle fleet. Road crash injuries are among the three leading causes of deaths for people between five and forty-four years of age. The economic burden of road crashes has been put at between 1 and 3 per cent of the Gross National Product (GNP) (WHO, 2011) US\$14 billion would have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn helmet during the same period (NHTSA, 2004).

However, the rules and their enforcement form a vital component of the tripod of road transport regulations namely economic, service and safety regulations. Economic regulation seeks to promote fairness among competitors in the road industry; service regulation involves ensuring that regulated carriers provide services that are consistent with their operating rights; while safety regulation is designed to protect the general public, users and operators from crashes as well as unhealthy environment (Wood and Johnson 1993:91).

There are various studies on compliance rates with road traffic regulations across the globe among various types of road users, motorists and pedestrians. Studies on seat belt usage and effectiveness are common among motorists (Evans and Frick, 1986; Morgan, 1999; Elvik and Vaa, 2004; Norlen, et al. 2010) while safety helmet usage is common among motorcyclists. Motorcycling is the mode of transport involving by far the greatest risk (EC, 2003:32).

In a study of 500 motorcyclists in Kagang, Selangor Malaysia, it was found that fifty four-point four percent (54.4%) of the motorcyclists used helmets properly; twenty one-point four percent (21.4%) used it improperly while 24.2% did not wear helmets. Age, gender, race, formal education, prior accident, experience and type of licence held were found to be significantly related to the usage of crash helmet (Kulanthayan, et al. 2000).

A rural study of crash helmet usage in Nigeria has found zero compliance rate (Owoaje, et al 2005). Apart from helmet usage, other studies on compliance with regulations such as Arosanyin (2007a) found compliance rate with driver licence at fifty seven percent (57%) among commercial motorcyclists in Ilorin, Nigeria. The non-compliance was estimated at forty three percent (43%). The main reasons given for not having driver's licence were high cost of acquisition and weak enforcement. The same survey also found total compliance with the minimum age requirement and engine capacity. In terms of crash helmet the compliance rate was estimated at thirteen-point five percent (13.5%) due to weak enforcement (Arosanyin 2007b). Iribhogbe, et al. (2009) found among 996 commercial motorcyclists in Benin City, Nigeria that twenty six-point five percent (26.5%) had no driver licence while seventy three-point five percent (73.5%) had it. Only twenty seven-point two percent (27.2 5%) of those who had licence actually took a road test before they were issued the licence.

The findings of the study further showed that, fifty six-point four percent (56.4%) of the operators had crash helmets but do not use them regularly due to what they termed 'inconvenience' and high cost. Incidences of under-aged drivers were also recorded as the minimum age found in the study was 16 years against the stipulated legal minimum of eighteen years (18 years). Evidences of the use of motorcycles with lower capacity were found in the works of Oluwadiya, et al. (2009). The range of engine capacity was between 85cc and 125cc. In the study, about 15% of the operators carry more than one passenger; and 96.5% were found not wearing safety helmet.

## **7. Intoxicants Usage and Commercial Motorcycle Operators**

Increasingly noticeable as a feature of rural and urban transportation in a bid to solve transportation problems in Nigeria are Commercial Motorcycle Operators (CMO). They transport people and their goods, especially farm products, from place to place. It is however saddening that as much as Commercial Motorcycle Operators (CMO) contributes to enhancement of livelihoods, their involvement in road accidents is increasing at a rate they are thought to constitute a menace to the society (Falope, 1991). According to (United States) National Highway Traffic Administration 2002, motorcycles are the most dangerous type of motor vehicles to drive at a rate of 35.0 fatal crashes per 100 million miles of travel, compared to just 1.7 fatal crashes per 100 million miles of travel by passenger cars. A study of rural CMOs in Nigeria by Amoran et al (2006) indicated that in a single year, about 46% of respondents were involved in at least one road accident. Non-adherence to safety measures and poor road conditions has been noted to contribute to the spate of commercial motorcycle accidents in Nigeria (Oginni et al. 2007). It is however not improbable that the reported high rate of use of intoxicants among commercial motorcycle operators (CMO) could as well be a contributory factor (Adako, 2007).

According to Branans and Knudson 2001, intoxicated commercial motorcycle operators (CMOs) are also less likely to protect themselves by wearing crash helmets,



thus aggravating road accident occurrences. However, another study of motorcyclists by Pillegi et al. (2006) found that routine helmet use was higher among current smokers and alcohol drinkers, while as well confirming the prevalence of accidents among motorcyclist who engaged in risky behaviours that included intoxication and use of mobile phone while driving. Cabiker (2008) posited that in more than half of motorcycle fatalities, alcohol use was the key ingredient, and that significantly higher levels of alcohol use are attributable to motorcycle riders than car drivers. Indeed, the leaders of commercial motorcyclists associations in Nigeria admitted complicity of their members regarding use of intoxicants and that most commercial motorcycle accidents were traceable to use of intoxicants (Adako, 2007).

Empirical evidences for the use of intoxicants (alcohol) among Commercial Motorcycle Operators was provided by the work of Ngim and Udosen (2007), who found that about thirty five percent(35%) of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in their study used alcohol to 'enhance job performance'. Commercial Motorcycle Operators are however, not particularly undesirable in Nigeria's drive for socio-economic development. Their contribution to social life and poverty reduction cannot be overlooked. The problems associated with the failure of rail transport, scarcity of taxis and buses have been eased by appreciable degree, through the ubiquitous, Commercial Motorcycle Operators.

The relatively low costs of purchase and operation or maintenance of commercial motorcycles keeps attracting numerous job seekers, thus helping to reduce unemployment, particularly among school and college graduates (Oginni et al., 2007). But working under the influence of intoxicants, however, portends unfavourable consequences for the operators, their customers, and the society at large. A compelling need thus arises to ensure the safety of millions of passengers of CMOs while also keeping the operators gainfully employed and healthy.

## **8. Theoretical Framework**

### **8.1 Strain Theory**

Strain theory as propounded by Robert King Merton is concerned with social regulation of the means people use to obtain societal goals. Merton perceives a "strain toward anomie" which is relative to the lack of cultural emphasis on institutional norms that regulate the legitimate means for obtaining success in human society. Secondly, structural blockages that limit access to legitimate means for many members of human society also contribute to its anomic tendencies. Under such conditions, behaviour tends to be governed solely by considerations of expediency or effectiveness in obtaining the goal rather than by a concern with whether or not the behaviour conforms to institutional norms.

However, chronic discrepancy between cultural promises and structural realities not only undermines social support for institutional norms but also promotes violations of those norms. Blocked in their pursuit of economic success, many members of society

are forced to adapt in deviant ways to this frustrating environmental condition. To further explain how people respond to societal pressure or constraint, Merton presents an analytical typology of individual adaptations to the discrepancy between culture and social structure in human society.

**Figure 1:** Merton's typology of individual adaptations to environmental pressures

Type of Adaptation	Cultural Goal	Institutionalized Means
I. Conformity	+	+
<b>II. Innovation</b>	+	-
III. Ritualism	-	+
IV. Retreatism	-	-
V. Rebellion	±	±
<p><b>Note:</b> + signifies acceptance, - signifies rejection, and ± signifies rejection of prevailing goal or means and substitution of new goal or means.</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Merton, 1957</p>		

*Conformity*, for instance, is a non-deviant adaptation where people continue to engage in legitimate occupational or educational roles despite environmental pressures toward deviant behaviour. That is, the conformist accepts and strives for the cultural goal of material success (+) by following institutionalized means (+). *Innovation*, on the other hand, involves acceptance of the cultural goal (+) but rejection of legitimate, institutionalized means (-). Instead, the innovator moves into criminal or delinquent roles that employ illegitimate means to obtain economic success. Merton proposes that innovation is particularly characteristic of the lower class, where access to legitimate means is especially limited and the “strain toward anomie” is most severe.

However, *ritualism* to Merton represents quite a different sort of departure from cultural standards than does innovation. The ritualist is an over-conformist. Here, the pursuit of the dominant cultural goal of economic success is rejected or abandoned (-) and compulsive conformity to institutional norms (+) becomes an end in itself. Merton argues that this adaptation is most likely to occur within the lower middle class society where socialization practices emphasize strict discipline and rigid conformity to rules.

Furthermore, *retreatism* involves complete escape from the pressures and demands of organized society. Merton’s analysis of retreatism is more individualistic than does his discussion of other types of adaptation. Retreatism is presented as an escape mechanism whereby the individual resolves *internal conflict* between moral constraints against the use of illegitimate means and repeated failure to attain success through legitimate means. The final adaptation in Merton’s typology is rebellion, the two ± signs show that the rebel not only rejects the goals and means of the established society but actively attempts to substitute *new* goals and means in their place.

## 8.2 The Innovative Commercial Motorcycle Operators

In Nigeria society today, there is pressure on many individual to achieve societal valued success which is generally believed to be value system from the parental side to the reared and nurtured children. The educational system, the mass media, parents and peers all encourage this goal, but there are not enough means for everyone to

successfully achieve the socially approved goals such as, acquire high level of formal education, own landed properties as well acquire all other necessary valuables in order to make life habitable. Driven by the dominant cultural emphasis on societal goals, the Commercial Motorcycle Operators (CMOs) engage in the business for them to overcome societal structural blockages that mitigate them from attaining the socially prescribed necessities of life. Thus, Merton's analysis of innovation, like Durkheim's analysis of anomic suicide, arrives as an environmental explanation of an important set of social facts.

Unemployment, underemployment and poverty are the basic problems plaguing Nigeria society. High rate of open unemployment especially among the youths in Nigeria is as prevalent as the rate of underemployed which are the major factors responsible for low standard of living in the country. Poverty is therefore widespread both in the cities and urban areas of Nigeria and other developing nations of the world (Amaghionyeodiwe, 2009; cited in Ogunrinola, 2010). The types of work available in the informal economy of Nigeria society are diverse and multifarious. It stretches from casual and unstable employment like garbage picking, street trading, domestic help, and so on; to self-employment in Okada business. In order to provide themselves with means of support, many Nigerians have no choice but to exploit the income and self or casual employment opportunities in the Okada business. The business has thus become one of the major providers of employment in Nigeria.

The refusal of the federal government to practically make formal education free and compulsory as well as its seeming rejection of the United Nations' directives to spend 26% of its annual budget on education have made Nigerian youths with poor socio-economic background to abandon the inalienable right to education by withdrawing from schools, hence, their continuous engagement in the Okada business (Olu-Olu, 2006). Faced with the problem of survival, they took to odds jobs in the informal sector of the economy as highlighted inter-alia.

However, many people engage in Okada business indirectly by employing young boys as riders. Very many youths take to the business as their lender of last resort even without the necessary training. This, it is believed, culminates into unprecedented roads accidents, incessant involvement of riders in criminal activities and political thuggery to mention but a few.

## **9. Methods**

The design adopted for this study is the cross sectional survey design. Cross sectional survey design was adopted because data were collected at a particular point in time from the selected sample and their responses were used to describe and explain the characteristics of the entire study population. The choice of this design derives from its relative importance in the collection of accurate information from respondents at greater efficiency. The study was carried out in Yaba metropolis, of Lagos State, Nigeria. Yaba is a Sub-Urban area of Lagos, Nigeria. Institutions of higher learning in

the area include Queen’s College, the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research, the Yaba college of Technology, Igbobi College, the University of Lagos, the Federal School of Science and Technical College, and the Federal College of Education. Yaba has one of the busiest market sites in Lagos, known as Tejuosho Market, Nigeria. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yaba, Lagos, 2012).

The study utilized data generated from Cross-Sectional Survey and In-Depth interviews. The population for the survey consists of registered Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Yaba Area of Lagos State, irrespective of tribe or ethnic division. It covers both sexes (male and female) provided the individual is actively employed in the business and dully registered to operate within Yaba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State. However, it covers Okada passengers, other road users as well as law enforcement agents who were purposively selected for in-depth interviews.

This study covered the eleven take-off points of okada riders within Yaba local council development area of Lagos State. To obtain reasonably large and representative sample, Stratified Random Sampling Technique was adopted for the selection of representative sample of diverse and heterogeneous characteristics for the study population. The eleven major take-off points of okada riders in Yaba area of Lagos State were separated as strata and each stratum were assigned sample size of fifty percent (50%). It was done through selection process, which was made easier through the involvement of Okada Riders Association (ORA) executive officers. In-depth interviews were also conducted among the selected officers each from the Okada Riders Associations (ORA), Police, and Road Safety Marshals (RSMs) across the eleven take-off points in the study location. However, Purposive Sampling Technique was adopted in selecting participants for the in-depth interviews. From the total population of five hundred and thirty eight (538) registered Commercial Motorcycle operators in the study area, a sample frame of two hundred and sixty nine (269) registered Okada Riders were selected. I randomly selected 50% of registered members from each of the eleven take-off points within the study location, subject to maximum of twenty nine (29) respondents from each take-off point. If the selected person was not available for interview, the next person in the list was selected as replacement. In all, the research covered eleven (11) take-off points in Yaba local development council area, which was expected to give a total of two hundred and sixty nine (269) respondents for the survey. The statistical methods used in the analysis included the charts, percentages, cross-tabulation, and chi-square.

**Table 1:** Sample Frame of Registered Commercial Motorcycle Operators  
 in Yaba Area of Lagos State

S/N	Take-Off Points	Sub-Take-Off Points	Registered Operators	Sample Selected (50%)
1.	Yaba	Phase I	54	27
2.	Yaba	Phase II	48	24
3.	Jibowu	Phase I	49	25
4.	Jibowu	Phase II	44	22
5.	Unilag	-	58	29
6.	Iyana Church	-	51	25

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7.	Ajoke	-	42	21
8.	Abule Ijesha	-	50	25
9.	Alago Meji	-	46	23
10.	Adekunle	-	44	22
11.	Sabo	-	52	26
<b>Total</b>		-	<b>538</b>	<b>269</b>

Source: Key Informant Interview, 2018.

**Table 2:** Summary of Research Instruments of Data Collection

Instrument	Sample Size (Okada Riders)	Commuters	Police Officer	Road Safety Marshal	Okada Riders Officer	Grand Total
Survey (Questionnaire)	269	-	-	-	-	269
In-Depth Interview Guide	-	1	1	1	11	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>284</b>

Source: Key Informant Interview, 2018.

### 9.1 Data Presentation

Out of the 269 administered questionnaires for this study, only 232 returned questionnaires were properly filled without missing values and mutilation, therefore the said number was used for the data analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16 was used to perform frequency count, percentages and chi square.

### 9.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

**Table 5.1.1:** Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Demographic Variables

Variables/Attributes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	232	100
Female	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 18 years	8	3.4
18-26 years	63	27.2
27-35 years	132	56.9
36 years and above	29	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	89	38.4
Islam	109	47.0
Traditional	34	14.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>		
Yoruba	90	38.8
Igbo	68	29.3
Hausa	71	30.6
Others	3	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
No Formal Education	16	6.9
Primary	82	35.3

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Secondary	125	53.9
Post-Secondary	9	3.9
Total	<b>232</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Monthly Income (in naira)</b>		
Less than 10,000	4	1.7
10,000 - 24,999	53	22.8
25,000 - 39,999	114	49.1
40,000 and above	61	26.3
Total	<b>232</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	62	26.7
Married	150	64.7
Divorced	7	3.0
Widowed	7	3.0
Separated	6	2.6
Total	<b>232</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

## 10. Test of Hypotheses

In this section, the hypotheses formulated to guide the study were tested. To achieve this, the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistical method was adopted.

Level of significance = 0.05 (alpha level)

### 10.1 Hypothesis One

**Table 3: Cross Tabulation of Willingness to Quit Okada Business and Engagement in the Business**

Would you love to quit okada business if given paid employment?	Why are you in Okada business?				Total
	To raise money for other business	Unemployment	To be self-employed	To provide for family	
Yes	47 22.2%	78 36.8%	59 27.8%	28 13.2%	212 100%
No	4 20%	2 10%	4 20%	10 50%	20 100%
Total	51 22%	80 34.5%	63 27.2%	38 16.4%	232 100%

$\chi^2 = 19.361$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $P\text{-value} = 0.000$

#### 10.1.1 Decision Region

Since the P-value (0.000) is less than 0.05 at level of significance with 3 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that says "There is no significant relationship between unemployment and engagement in okada business" was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) which states "There is a significant relationship between unemployment and engagement in Okada business" is accepted.

### 10.2 Hypothesis Two

**Table 4:** Cross Tabulation of Government Assistance in Terms of Empowerment and Engagement in Okada Business

Government assists Okada Riders through empowerment schemes and infrastructural development?	Why are you in Okada business?				Total
	To raise money for other business	Unemployment	To be self-employed	To provide for family	
Strongly agree	9 28.1%	5 15.6%	9 28.1%	9 28.1%	32 100%
Agree	11 23.4%	10 21.3%	20 42.6%	6 12.8%	47 100%
Disagree	22 18.5%	56 47.1%	23 19.3%	18 15.1%	119 100%
Strongly disagree	9 26.5%	9 26.5%	11 32.4%	5 14.7%	34 100%
Total	51 22%	80 34.5%	63 27.2%	38 16.4%	232 100%

$X^2 = 23.714$ ;  $df = 9$ ;  $P\text{-value} = 0.005$

### 10.2.1 Decision Region

Since the P-value (0.005) is less than 0.05 at level of significance with 9 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that says "There is no significant relationship between inadequate infrastructure and emergence of okada business" was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) which says "**There is a significant relationship between inadequate infrastructure and engagement in Okada business**" is accepted.

### 10.3 Hypothesis Three

**Table 5:** Cross Tabulation of Highest Formal Educational Attainment and Engagement in Okada Business

Highest formal educational attainment	Why are you in Okada business?				Total
	To raise money for other business	Unemployment	To be self-employed	To provide for family	
No formal education	1 6.3%	4 25%	8 50%	3 18.8%	16 100%
Primary	30 36.6%	18 22%	21 25.6%	13 15.9%	82 100%
Secondary	20 16%	52 41.6%	32 25.6%	21 16.8%	125 100%
Post-secondary	0 0%	6 66.7%	2 22.2%	1 11.1%	9 100%
Total	51 22%	80 34.5%	63 27.2%	38 16.4%	232 100%

$X^2 = 26.035$ ;  $df = 9$ ;  $P\text{-value} = 0.002$

### 10.3.1 Decision Region

Since the P-value (0.002) is less than 0.05 at level of significance with 9 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that says "There is no significant relationship between acquisition of formal education and emergence of Okada business" was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) which says "**There is a significant relationship between acquisition of formal education and emergence of okada business**" is accepted.

## 10.4 Hypothesis Four

**Table 6:** Cross Tabulation of Extent to Which Okada Riders Satisfy Their Basic Needs and Engagement in the Business

Extent to which okada riders satisfy their basic needs	Why are you in Okada business?				Total
	To raise money for other business	Unemployment	To be self-employed	To provide for family	
Rarely	7 33.3%	3 14.3%	10 47.6%	1 4.8%	21 100%
Sometimes	25 24%	33 31.7%	24 23.1%	22 21.2%	104 100%
Always	16 18.2%	38 43.2%	21 23.9%	13 14.8%	88 100%
Often	3 15.8%	6 31.6%	8 42.1%	2 10.5%	19 100%
Total	51 22%	80 34.5%	63 27.2%	38 16.4%	232 100%

$X^2 = 23.714$ ;  $df = 9$ ;  $P\text{-value} = 0.057$

### 10.4.1 Decision Region

Since the P-value (0.057) is greater than 0.05 at level of significance with 9 degree of freedom, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that says “**There is no significant relationship between financial responsibilities and emergence of Okada business**” is accepted, while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) which says “There is a significant relationship between financial responsibilities and emergence of Okada business” was rejected.

## 11. Discussion of Findings

The foregoing analysis revealed significant facts about the vocation of commercial motorcycle business, particularly in the study area. Although series of actions and regulations have been taken either at the state or federal government level to constraint the activities of Commercial Motorcycle Operators, empirical information presented in this research work showed that the vocation tends to be flourishing due to the functionality of the sector. In this wise, it can be stated based on the findings that people who were engaged in commercial motorcycle business have been motivated by unemployment, infrastructural incapacitation as well as lack of sufficient capital to establish better business. Also, inability of Okada riders to acquire necessary educational qualifications that could fetch them better employment opportunity cum improved social status was one of the major factors that were responsible for incessant exodus of able men engaging in okada business.

It must be mentioned that that *functionalism, strain and social action theories* were adopted for explanation in this study. Therefore, discussion of findings based on the theoretical frameworks will help us understand the relevance of okada business in the study area and Nigeria at large.

The ideology of Talcott Parsons’ functionalism was to identify the functional prerequisites for society. That is, the survival of every human society depends on



determining factors of adaptation, Goal attainment, Integration, and Latency. The emphasis of this study being *adaptation*, explains the unavailability of infrastructural facilities which people needed for survival as inadequate, thereby resulted to engagement in Okada business. The implication of adaptation is that every society has resources either social or economic which members can explore for satisfaction of necessities of life.

From the foregoing, Okada business was the most viable rational business action through which the operators could sustain economic and social needs (for instance, generate income and be employed). However, the findings also showed that Commercial Motorcycle Operation in the study area were mitigated by government regulations, such as imposed ban and restriction preventing them from plying four hundred and seventy five (475) express roads in Lagos State which constrained smooth operation of the business.

It is important to note that most Okada riders reported the reasons sustaining their engagement in Okada business as a result of unemployment. This structural problem of unemployment was motivated by infrastructural failure. The question is that did government investigate the reason for widespread of Commercial Motorcycle Operators in the state? However, if the reason is known prior to imposition of restriction, did government provide pro-active measures or alternatives that would mitigate adverse consequences of the restriction on Okada business? These issues are very germane for decision making.

Against this backdrop, government at all levels should know that there is a socio-economic rationality sustaining the operation of Commercial Motorcycle Operators. If government could not provide enabling environment for skills and aptitudes to flourish, there is no point hindering the survival strategies adopted by members of the society. However, if the trend of Okada business is allowed free reign, Nigerian society may be at the point of losing its technical and artisanship resources. For instance, over ninety percent (93.5%) of the Okada riders were artisan in different training skills who had abandoned their professional skills for Okada business. This is quite ridiculous. A society cannot survive in the absence of technical know-how. In the developed nations of the World such United State of America and China there are technical schools and colleges producing artisans and technologists. These are very crucial to the economic transformation of these nations.

Although the operation of commercial motorcycle in Nigeria calls for caution, particularly with respect to risk and criminal activities involved, yet every government action should take into consideration the socio-economic interest of the Okada operators. There is nothing wrong in restricting the operation of Okada riders. The argument is that government should take responsibility for sustaining socio-economic needs of people through improved infrastructural development such as stable electricity supply, creation of direct and indirect employment opportunities cum provision of financial empowerment for better business start-up. Thus, the foregoing is essential for easy and organized human peaceful coexistence in the society.

## **12. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **12.1 Conclusion**

It is obvious in the data analysis of the study that Commercial Motorcycle Operation in the study area was central to economic sustenance of the operators as a source of empowerment and as a means of poverty reduction among the operators. The business is not only functional for sustaining the operators and their family members; it is also obvious that okada operation tends to complement other means of transportation especially where roads are bad and narrow. Hence, the socio-economic benefit of the sector is enormous as it serves as source of empowerment and employment to those who could not get employment in the formal sector of the economy, as well as few young school leavers in the study area.

Therefore, the significance of okada business in the study location is enormous. Although, anchored in okada business were various challenges ranging from high prevalence of very fatal accidents to imposed restrictions or ban by government at different levels. Also, the study also found high prevalence of stigmatization and unjust treatment against okada riders by law enforcement agents cum other road users in the study location. Notwithstanding the mitigations, okada business is very function at sustaining individual riders, as well as ensuring social security of the riders and the social system.

Hence, based on empirical facts of the study, the central conclusion is that the emergence of commercial motorcycle operators is connected to the failure of the State in providing enabling environment for more legitimate investment to flourish. Non-implementation of policy that centralized on human socio-economic development by the government necessitated deviations that hindered existing social order. The emergence of commercial motorcycle as a means of transportation in the study area and beyond is relatively functional to the survival of sub-system and the social system as a whole.

Although, there are challenges confronting the functionality of commercial motorcycle operations, the enduring solution may not be outright imposition of restriction or ban on the business. There should be collaboration among stakeholders (government, okada riders, and other road users) toward promoting decent attitude that is crucial to sustain safety of all road users. Government at all levels should put proactive measures in place to mitigate pull factors for okada business.

### **12.2 Recommendations**

The empirical data of the study revealed significant facts on the nature of Commercial Motorcycle Operations, especially in the study area. Based on the findings from the survey and in-depth interview conducted the following recommendation becomes germane.

- 1) The central motivation for engagement in okada business is unemployment and infrastructural constraints such as irregular electric power supply. To reduce the

spate of Commercial Motorcycle Operation on the highway roads, there should be provision of job opportunities for youths and regular power supply for sustainable growth of business and industry.

- 2) Commercial Motorcycle Operators tend to obey regulations imposed through their union/association as contained in the recruitment guideline. If there is incorporation and integration of government regulation in the union enforcement, there will be compliance with highway regulation. This calls for collaboration between okada union and government agencies such as roads safety commission, police and son on.
- 3) Commercial Motorcycle Business is vital to the economic sustenance of the riders and their dependants. The benefits also extend to passengers particularly the service coverage of the transportation medium (okada) in areas commercial motor vehicle (taxi/buses) can not cover. Therefore, any imposition of the government ban should take into consideration the plurality of users' interest by providing ameliorative alternatives.
- 4) The imposition of government ban on okada operation from express roads should be complemented with viable alternatives. It is either government initiate human centered empowerment programme/schemes or provides alternative route for commercial motorcycle operators on the roads in order to enhance the income of the riders. Also, there should be job opportunities that will reduce the interest of youth in the business. Government at all levels should deliver in creating enabling environment that would attract investors and industrial development.
- 5) Although okada riders would prefer shifting to their original skill or craft as coping strategy to overcome government imposition of ban which hinders efficiency of okada business, government should also ensure provision of social amenities such as stable power supply and capital (loans), which will thrive the desire for self-employment and sufficiency among Okada Riders.
- 6) Government should reorganize Okada business as Community Transport System (CTS). That is, Commercial Motorcycle Operators should be licensed and restricted to their domiciliary local government areas.
- 7) Government should re-register Commercial Motorcycle Operators with a view to provide the genuine ones (registered okada riders) adversely affected by government policy other job opportunities. Some of them could be absorbed into the Lagos State Transport Establishment (LAGBUS) as conductors and drivers.
- 8) Government should assist Okada Riders with the acquisition of skills that would make them employable or become self-employed.

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IN YABA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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