

African Journal of Arts and Cultural Studies, Volume 6, Number 1, 2013**OKADA COMMERCIAL MOTORCYCLE: ANY GAIN?**

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of commercial motorcycle operation also known as okada has attracted government action and regulation in recent time. This is particularly in the area of banning okada riders from major city centres and high-way roads. This regulation negatively influenced the economic interest of the riders in the vocation despite the contribution of okada business as source of employment and income to numerous Nigerian youths. Against this backdrop, the study examined the survival strategies adopted by okada operators in Ibadan metropolitan city. The study was anchored on functionalism theory. Research design of the study combined quantitative and qualitative methods. A sample of 214 respondents was selected using multi stage sampling techniques such as purposive, simple random, cluster, quota and convenience sampling. Instruments for data collection were questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Over 80% of okada operators in the study areas were motivated into commercial motorcycle due to unemployment and infrastructural constraint of electricity and shortage of investment capital. About 79% of the riders possessed training skills and aptitudes, however they were out of job due to power supply and lack of financial capital. At least 90% of the riders earned income sustainable for their livelihood. Not less than 20% of the riders were ready to comply with government regulation. This is because the riders expressed feelings of apprehension that there were no viable alternative to survive outside commercial motorcycle. At least 65.2% were determined to continue with their okada operation despite government ban. Since okada is a major means of survival, the business may continue to flourish in the midst of stiff regulation. Therefore, the imposition of government ban on okada operation may be unjustified unless there are alternatives (such as sustainable power supply, alternative routs for riders, and provision of employment) to absorb the operators in the sector.

Keywords: Commercial motorcycle, Benefits and challenges, Government regulation, Survival strategies of operators, Functionalism.

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 centres 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, paratransit, streetcar, light rail, heavy rail, commuter rail, automated guided transit, and ferry (Filani and Osayimwense, 1974). Though some of these aforementioned public transportation means 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).

However, the prevailing situation in the Nigerian 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). For example, it is estimated that over 70% of the Nigerian youths, graduate inclusive are either unemployed or underemployed (Bureau of statistics, 2011). In order to sustain living, many of these youths ventured into different economic activities, one of which is commercial motorcycle. In this wise, the increasing importance of motorcycle as source of commercial transportation will be perceived in terms of economic empowerment for the operators.

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The significant aspect of this argument is that operation of the business is not only limited to non-literates, individuals of enviable academic qualifications (literate) are also actively involved (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, 2005). This is to say that commercial motorcycle is an integral part of the economic system, which helps to create jobs for numerous citizens.

Furthermore, the increasing importance of commercial motorcycle may also be perceived in terms of its role as a complement or substitute to public transportation system. It is quite notable that there is high patronage of the transport system despite high level of risk associated. Thus, this line of discussion can be buttressed by some facts. For example, the road networks in many parts of the urban centres are either increasingly becoming dilapidated or have little or no maintenance, which tends to slow down traffic on commercial vehicles. Therefore, in order to reduce the stress commuters of commercial buses/taxi cars may be subjected; motorcycles increasingly gain dominance among city travelers. In the same vein, the situation in the rural areas may be worse. The point is that commercial motorcycles often constitute the viable source of transportation in rural communities with poor motorable road networks. Therefore, commuters may prefer motorcycles as alternative to commercial vehicles in difficult situation in order to ease prevailing stress. One of such conditions can be viewed in the aspect of traffic jam or hold-up, which every rational individual wishes to avoid.

However, it is important to mention that the growing importance of commercial motorcycle operation has attracted different development in the transport sector. Like their counterpart in the vehicular division, there is existence of unionism among members that makes the service formidable. This is recognition that the withdrawal of their services at any point in time may significantly have effect on commuters. In the same vein, the operation has attracted the attention of government agency such as Road Safety Commission into regulating activities of the sector (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, 2005). This is in the aspect of prescription of driving license to every rider for safety. It must be held that several other government agencies, the Police inclusive are stakeholders in commercial motorcycle operation. Hence, it follows the economic activities of motorcycle riders occupy strategic place in the Nigeria social structure.

Meanwhile, the commercial motorcycle operation is assuming essential posture in the twentieth century, especially in Nigeria. If one is to evaluate the economic importance of the riders, it can be maintained that discussion of public transportation in Nigeria is never complete until integration of commercial riders. Most importantly, the activity has contributed to GDP per capital income and sustainability of youth employment in Nigeria (Obadina, 2004). However, despite the perceived benefits and contribution of commercial motorcycle to the economy of the users, several challenges have fraught the system. This is particularly in the area of government imposed ban on commercial motorcycle operation. In this light, it becomes important that examining different strategies of survival among the operators would be essential, particularly in the face of rising challenges confronting the business. In this wise, this empirical paper will supplement existing literatures, especially in the field of commercial motorcycle operations.

Therefore, in light of the preceding discourse, the study addressed the following specific objectives:

- a. Assess the benefits and challenges involved in the activities of commercial motorcycle in the study areas.
- b. Investigate the survival strategies adopted by motorcycle operators in coping with government ban in the study areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLES OF OKADA IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Commercial motorcycle (*Okadas*) are adapted to contemporary Nigerian society, which is lacking in taxi and bus service, and suffers from congestion, and the poorly maintained roads. They have become a ubiquitous feature of Nigerian cities because of their low cost of purchase and fuel efficiency (Odeleye, 2010). However, they are sometimes more expensive for consumers than public transit. *Okadas* have thrived during gasoline shortages in Nigeria due to their superior fuel economy to cars. A weak mass transit system has spawned the use of these alternate means of transport. *Okadas* are also able to navigate and travel roads where no car has gone before, especially in villages, and urban slums (Adefemi, 2006). *Okada* riding has been described as “a unique experience” by regular passengers and tourists. *Okadas* are used in cities like Lagos, Ibadan by businessmen, government workers, and students to overcome traffic congestion (Odeleye, 2010).

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A study carried out in 1993 in Yola, a medium-sized city in the North-Eastern state of Adamawa, Nigeria, provides additional insight into the nature of the okada business. The study showed that about 88% of the *okada* riders were aged between 18 and 30 years and only 47% of them received formal education of any form (Akinlolu, 1993). The 1993 survey also elicited information from 106 motorcycle users. Customers were generally, male (65%); young adults between 18 and 30 years of age (57%); in possession of a diploma from a secondary school or higher (83%); unemployed but in the job market (59%); and of low-to-moderate income levels (45%). Okadas were valued mainly because they were fast and readily available. Customers disliked them because they were considered to be unsafe (stated by two-thirds of respondents) and expensive (stated by 43% of respondents). The survey of okada customers in Akure also revealed customer concerns over safety – 61% felt operators drove too fast and 31% felt they drove too recklessly. Left with few mobility options, many patronize okadas well knowing the significant risks involved (Solagberu, 2006).

Okadas, like motorcycles elsewhere, have a higher rate of crippling and fatal accidents per unit distance than automobiles. A study conducted in the USA in 2004 showed that while about 15.0 cars out of 100,000 ended up in fatal crashes, the rate for motorcycles was 69.3 per 100,000 (US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2001). A 1998 study at the Obafemi Awolowo Teaching Hospital, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, showed that injuries to limb occurred in 79.3% of patients who reported at the emergency department of that hospital. The same study also stated the male: female ratio of accident victims to be around 2.8:1, and identified the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) to be practically nonexistent among most okada riders (Solagberu, 2006).

Given the common incidence and serious consequences of motorcycle accidents, there has been surprisingly little study of their causes. The only major work done on this subject in the USA is the Hurt Report (US National Technical Information Service, 1981), performed around 1980 in the Los Angeles area. One of the central conclusions of the report stressed thus: the failure of motorists to detect and recognize motorcycles in traffic is the predominating cause of motorcycle accidents. The driver of the other vehicle involved in collision with the motorcycle did not see the motorcycle before the collision, or did not see the motorcycle until too late to avoid the collision. However, in Nigeria, the reverse may in fact be true – the vast majority of okada riders do not pay attention to road signs and other motorists (Solagberu, 2006). Other causes of motorcycle accidents involve unlicensed and untrained riders. In some parts of Nigeria, okada riders make their commercial debut after a few hours of training sessions.

Underage okada riders are not a rarity on Nigerian roads. Drunk or drugged riding; shared-rides involving two or more passengers; the poor state of Nigerian roads, which are typically riddled with pot-holes; graft and corruption among the road safety officials, and the Nigeria Police Force, both of whom are easily induced into condoning traffic misdemeanors when given bribes (Odeleye, 2010). These factors have contributed to the present rate of okada accident in Nigeria. The rise of *okada* has been linked to an increase in the crime rates in cities throughout Nigeria, particularly in the city centers, urban slums and, red light districts (Solagberu, 2006). This criminal activities range from (the typical) snatching of personal effects (such as mobile phones, purses, bags) to abduction, grand larceny, and (political) killings. Similarly, *okadas* have been criticized (Odeleye, 2010) for their roles in causing or exacerbating traffic congestions in the cities where they operate. Cases also occur of gang beatings where *okada* riders take on offending/innocent motorists during accidents. Fights have been known to flare up in rioting, and setting of vehicles on fire (Solagberu, 2006).

However, motor vehicle drivers (both private and commercial) may not be absolved in the consideration of deviant behaviours among public road users. Abane (1994) refers to categories of drivers as “traffic hazards” who should be removed from the roads. Similarly and relative to Nigerian case, Lartey (1977) classified city drivers into five categories; namely:

- (i) The bully – one who tries to overtake by forcing other road users out of lane or even off the road;
- (ii) The Jack Rabbit – one who drives in leaps and bounds with sudden stops and quick starts;
- (iii) The Bumper-Hagger – one who rides very close to other vehicles;
- (iv) The light-Jumper – one who always wants to gain advantage over the other road users to the extent of driving through red light;
- (v) The Speed Demon – one who makes his own laws in speeding and believes he/she is in a race with other drivers.

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It should however be pointed out that all drivers that falls into the above categories are road hazards that should be severely sanctioned from our roads. Therefore, existing traffic management agencies need to be over hauled in order to make our road safer. In actual fact, the persistent rate of deviant driving behaviour in Nigerian cities often leads to social, community, health and economic problems such as danger to life/well-being, societal decay and high risk of disability and death. The unguided rate of urbanization, corrupt transport planning measures, poor state of transport infrastructure, illiteracy and deplorable state of the economic has enhanced the occurrence of this social malaise (Odufuwa, 2006). This however has significant effect on commercial motorcycle operation given the nature of Nigerian roads.

METHODOLOGY

The city of Ibadan is predominantly a Yoruba speaking community in the South Western region of Nigeria. The approximate population is 2.8 million (National Population Commission, 2006). Ibadan is a composition of different ethnic groups resident in the city thereby making it a multi-ethnic area. The educational development of the area cannot be over emphasized as the first Nigerian premier University education *university of Ibadan* is located in the area. The university has since its establishment in 1948 contributed considerably to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. Moreover, Ibadan is predominantly a composition of Christian worshippers, though Islamic religion also thrives in the area. However, the means of transportation in Ibadan is dominantly high way roads comprising both private and commercial motor vehicles as well as motorcycle and tricycle. Though there are other transport carriage systems such as rail road and air ways, road transportation is most utilized and accessible to wide range of users in Ibadan. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted for the study. While quantitative method was based on questionnaire, the qualitative method utilized in-depth interviews. In essence, the population of the study was mainly commercial motorcycle operators. Hence, 194 *okada* riders were selected from strategic locations to fill questionnaire instrument, while 10 respondents were interviewed covering law enforcement agents, *okada* passengers, and commercial motorcycle union member. Sampling method was based on convenience and purposive sampling.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

The significance of demographic data in any research study is substantial. This lies in the fact that the responses to substantive research issues by respondents tend to be influenced by their socio-economic status of the individual (Pacione, 2002). In this light, the following presentation addresses demographic characteristics of research respondents in the study areas.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to Demographic Variables

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	156	80.4
Single	38	19.6
Total	194	100.0
Religion affiliation	Frequency	Percentage
Christian	105	54.1
Islam	82	42.3
Traditional	7	3.6
Total	194	100.0
Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage
B.sc/HND	11	5.7
OND/NCE	19	9.8
Post Primary	116	59.8
Primary	48	24.7
Total	194	100.0

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Age range (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
10-20	15	7.7
21-30	75	38.7
31-40	82	42.3
41-50	18	9.3
51 and above	4	2.1
Total	194	100.0
Monthly income (in NGN)	Frequency	Percentage
<7,500	28	14.4
7,500- 15,000	83	42.8
15,500- 23,000	38	19.6
23,500- 31,000	34	17.5
31,500- 39,000	7	3.6
>39,500	4	2.1
Total	194	100.0
State of origin	Frequency	Percentage
South-west	153	78.9
North-west	7	3.6
North-central	6	3.1
North-east	11	5.7
South-east	12	6.2
South-south	3	1.5
Non-Nigerian	2	1.0
Total	194	100.0
Mode of operation	Frequency	Percentage
Riding for self	176	90.7
Riding for somebody	18	9.3
Total	194	100.0
Ethnic origin	Frequency	Percentage
Yoruba	152	78.4
House	17	8.7
Igbo	25	12.9
Total	194	100.0
Occupational status	Frequency	Percentage
Business	22	11.3
Trading	78	40.2
Artisan	47	24.2
Okada rider	33	17.0
Others	14	7.2
Total	194	100.0
Years of duration in the business	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	113	58.2
Less than 10 years	57	29.4
Less than 15 years	19	9.8
Less than 20 years	2	1.0
Less than 25 years	3	1.5
Total	194	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2011)

The result in the table above shows that a higher percentage of okada riders in the study areas were married (80.4%), though the rate varies across locations. The higher prevalent rate was observed in Orogun (23.7%) and Sango (20.6%). The findings indicate that there were more married men who were actively engaged in commercial motorcycle business in the study areas.

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In other words, participants in the commercial motorcycle operation tended to have family dependants who relied on okada economy for survival in the study areas. This reflects the view of Gbadamosi (2006) in the preceding literature reviewed, which stressed the significance of okada economy on family live and sustenance.

The classification of *okada* riders by religion in the study areas indicates that most respondents were affiliated with Christian faith (54.1%), though there were also substantial individuals with Islamic faith (42.3%). This variation is apparent across the study locations with Sango area having the highest (19.1%) Christian faithful and Orogun with highest (19.1%) Islamic followers. Therefore, it is obvious in the study areas that the type of religion individual is affiliated did not determine their motivation to participate in okada business. This is apparent in the differences in percentage between Christian faith and Islamic religion. However, it can be sustained that since the percentage of Christian faithful was highest in the study locations, Weber's ideology must be valid, which provided the link between religion of Christianity and hard work for economic achievement and sustainability.

Similarly, the table 4.1.1 shows that there were individuals with higher academic qualifications such as Bachelor Degree or Higher National Diploma (5.7%) who were engaged in the operation of commercial motorcycle business in the study areas. This affirmed the views of preceding scholars in the literatures that argued the overtly engagement of Nigerian Graduates in *okada* business. Some writers have expressed deep concern on the trend of Graduate involvement, while some have appreciated the trend as functional to the economic sustenance of Nigerian Graduate. However, what can be explained of this table is that most *okada* riders in the study areas were either secondary school graduates (59.8%) or holders of primary school leaving certificates (24.7%). Thus, Graduate employment in the sector may be reasoned on the basis of under employment as potentials may not be fully utilized in the real world. This accounts for the topic *Graduate okada riders; the wasted generation*, which was reviewed in the preceding literature. Notwithstanding the engagement of graduates in *okada* business, the sector has been economic viable for its participants.

The age distribution indicates that the majority of *okada* operators in the study locations were under the ages of forty years (42.3%) and thirty years (38.7%). This means majority of okada riders in the study areas were adults and youths in their economic active age. However, one isolated fact in the table is the percentage existence of operators whose ages were above fifty one years (2.1%). Though this did not exist in some locations of the study such as Mokola and Sango, it is however imperative that further empirical investigation is carried out because at such age it may not be safe to engage in this activity due to the level of risk involved. This explains the non existence of social security service to the elderly in Nigeria.

The income distribution of okada riders in the study locations revealed substantial percentage (42.8%) of respondents that earned above national minimum wage of monthly salary NGN7500, though the variation is highest for riders in Orogun (20.1%). Data also revealed that some riders made over NGN39500 on monthly basis. This is the exclusive case for riders in Apete (2.1%). The reasonable income that accrues from this vocation must be a vital reason for heavy engagement of youths and adults in the study areas, especially the married adults. This vehemently accounts for argument of dignity of labour put forward by Adetoro (2011). The writer strongly maintained that some okada riders have been financially successful in the business. Hence, labour is dignified when it sustains the instrumental and subsistence need of the people. Notwithstanding the income gained, the status of such occupation has been severely criticized, especially when graduates are involved.

Moreover, table 4.1.1 shows that it is not every *okada* rider in the study location had initially chosen to be trained in the business or have occupational status as okada man. For example, only (17.0%) of respondents had no other occupational skill except riding okada, while (40.2%) of the riders had other training skill such as trading apart from operating okada; and the (24.2%) of the riders were artisan. The variation across the study locations is that none of the riders in Mokola and Sango had occupational training skill or aptitude for okada riding. This means the economy of okada business accommodates people across occupational skills in the study areas. The revealing fact is about (70%) of *okada* riders who had vocational training skills had abandoned their trained vocations due to infrastructural constraint such as electricity problem thus, the case of artisan in the okada business would confirm the public outcry (Akinfemi, 2009) that the trend of rapid power failure and infrastructural decay in Nigeria has left numerous artisans jobless and economically

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useless. Therefore, to survive the challenge led people to seek for alternative means such as commercial motorcycle operation.

Furthermore, the table indicates the majority of individuals (58.2%) who were engaged in commercial motor cycle operation in the study areas had been in the business for duration of less than five years. This means okada business is a recent trend in transportation sector in the study areas, which has provided opportunities for people in economic engagement, though the life span of motorcycle as means of transportation exceeds the current trend. The finding thus validates the preceding literatures (Adeniji, 2009) on the rising spate of okada economy in Nigeria in the 21st century. Though the high level of risk and dangers associated with okada economy necessitated the ban imposed by some state governments (Opeifa, 2009), such decisions have been criticized due to the important role okada business plays in the economic empowerment of the people or riders who are engaged in the business.

Conclusively, the results show that okada riders in the study areas is a composition of people across the six geopolitical zones, though the rate for South-west (78.9%) was highest due to heavy concentration of Yoruba indigenes. This implies that the study locations were composition of heterogeneous population with some groups majority and others minority. This is obvious in the percentage distribution of ethnic origin.

FACTORS THAT MOTIVATED COMMERCIAL MOTORCYCLE RIDERS TO ENGAGE IN OKADA BUSINESS

The goal of this objective was to gain empirical insight into why okada riders embraced the business despite perceived level of challenges associated with it. The objective also engaged the analysis of the rider's level of satisfaction and fulfillment derived from commercial motorcycle.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to Factors that Motivate Okada Riders in the Business

Is this your first job ever?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	48	24.7
No	146	75.3
Total	194	100.0
Why are you in the business?	Frequency	Percentage
Unemployment	66	34.0
Poverty	62	32.0
Lack of capital to start business	44	22.7
Electricity	7	3.6
Poor salary	15	7.7
Total	194	100.0
Are you satisfied in the business?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	54	27.8
No	140	72.2
Total	194	100.0
Do you have association that protects your operation?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	176	90.7
No	18	9.3
Total	194	100.0
How does your association protect your operation?	Frequency	Percentage
When police arrested us	165	85.1
Granting us loans	16	8.2
Helping us when in trouble	4	2.1
Seminars	9	4.6
Total	194	100.0

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Are you permanently engaged in okada business?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	99	51.0
No	95	49.0
Total	194	100.0
Are you considering possibility of quitting the business?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	165	85.1
No	29	14.9
Total	194	100.0
Why do you wish to quit?	Frequency	Percentage
It is very risky to life	53	27.3
It is not good	44	22.7
It is very dangerous	41	21.1
I don't like the job	11	5.7
If I get another job	9	4.6
Health challenges	8	4.1
Others	28	14.4
Total	194	100.0
Do you think okada business is profitable?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	131	67.5
No	63	32.5
Total	194	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2011)

The information in table 2 revealed that most okada operators (75.3%) in the study areas had been in other occupations prior to their engagement in the okada business. This is evident in the demographic characteristics of respondents that show various occupations of the riders. The motivating factor for okada riders shows that unemployment (34.0%) was a major factor for engagement in the okada business. Other factors are identified as poverty (32.0%), lack of capital for business (22.7%), electricity problem (3.6%) and poor salary (7.7%). The motivating factors for riders in the study areas corroborate with the finding of Akinfemi (2009) that accounts for unemployment, and instability of electricity as a major pull factor.

As put in the words of a rider:

Unemployment and lack of money to set up a business is the reason of my engagement in okada. I am a university graduate for more than 7 years now without job. What do you expect me do? I must survive. I am a married man. The business is o.k. for now (IDI/ okada rider/ Apete/ March 2011).

Another respondent expressed his motivating factor:

I am in the business just because I want to make money and feed my family. I have my own skilled work, but light is too bad and irregular in my area. I have no capital to start my desired business. I want to make some money to start the business. If I can get the money, I will quit okada (IDI/ okada rider/ Apete/ March 2011).

The indication of the responses shows that individuals engaged in okada business were basically motivated due to some economic reasons as most riders did not have predetermined attitude to develop career as commercial motorcyclist. The result in the study areas validated the increasing engagement of graduates in the okada business as explained in the preceding literatures. Though graduate involvement in the business was criticized (Abane, 1994), such participation is appreciated as a way of surviving strategies for numerous people. Furthermore, empirical information in the study areas shows that the level of satisfaction among riders was low (27.8%). This may not be unconnected with the challenges that riders faced.

As put in the words of a respondent:

This business is no longer profitable like before. Government has imposed ban on our operations in on major high ways. The daily money you get is not as fat as before. The police are not even helping the matter.

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They collect bribe from us, charge us unnecessary fee to pay. The motor vehicle drivers are not friendly us at all. They drive without consideration for our safety (IDI/ okada association chairman/ Orogun/ March 2011).

It is important to mention that the level of dissatisfaction varies across the study areas with riders in Sango (20.6%) and Mokola (19.6%) having the highest rate. It must be mentioned that attitudes of motor vehicle drivers in Nigeria have been criticized (Adeniji, 2004). This reckless behaviour identified as deviant comprises the connotations *the bully; the jack rabbit; the bumper hagger; the light jumper; and the speed demons*. These attitudes of drivers are important factors that tend to increase the level of risk and dissatisfaction shown by okada riders. Similarly, the table information provides that the okada riders in the study areas have union association which protects their business interest. The functions of the union range from support in the hands of police (85.1%), granting of loans (8.2%), and education/seminars for members (4.6%). This support must be crucial for motivation of riders in okada business as indicated in the study areas. According to a respondent:

Our union always protects registered members whenever there is trouble, particularly relating to careless attitudes of motor vehicle drivers. We make sure that no member is unfairly treated by either police or motor drivers. We are registered under the state government. We lend loans to our members for their petty business (IDI/okada union chairman/Mokola/ March 2011).

An important fact to note in this interview is the protection of okada riders by union members against the perceived careless attitude of motor vehicle drivers. As noted in the view of a commentator, the over zealousness of okada riders in protecting their members on high-way is outrageous, especially when there is slight hitch between okada riders and motor vehicle. Whereas they (okada riders) are the most careless, impatient on roads (Solagberu, 2006) yet claimed to be right. Though some drivers may be careless as indicated in the literature, what is important is strict compliance to traffic rules by both road users. Furthermore, the result shows that significant numbers of okada riders in the study areas (85.1%) considered the option of quitting the business. This varies across the locations as riders in Orogun (25.3%) and Apete (22.7%) had the prevalent rate, though the level of variation in percentage relatively low across locations. The notable reason sustaining the wishes of the riders is the high risk (27.1%) such as fatal accident associated with the business. As put in the words of a respondent:

Okada accident is always fatal. Many have died in the business. If you go to University Teaching Hospital in Ibadan, there are many riders whose legs are seriously damaged beyond treatment and correction. The problem is that some okada riders are very careless. The motor drivers on roads do not even help the matter. This is very bad (IDI/okada union chairman/ Mokola/March 2011).

Therefore, it can be stated that though okada operation in the study areas may be profitable and serves as source of livelihood to operators, the apparent fact is that there is high level of risk in the operation. This can be linked to either the careless attitude of riders or motor vehicle drivers who exhibited deviant driving behaviours such as the bully, the jack rabbit, and the bumper hagger (Adeniji, 2009) to mention a few.

The Benefits and Challenges in Commercial Motorcycle

This objective measures the dimension of benefits and challenges of okada economy to operators. The ultimate goal is to understand if there is need to sustain okada operation in the study areas and beyond.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents Views on the Benefits Associated with Okada Operations

Commercial motorcycle positively contributes to income of the riders?	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	28	14.4
Neither agree nor disagree	13	6.7
Agree	68	35.1
Strongly agree	85	43.8
Total	194	100.0

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Commercial motorcycle provides employment for large numbers of people?	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	28	14.4
Neither agree nor disagree	7	3.6
Agree	109	56.2
Strongly agree	50	25.8
Total	194	100.0
There is high patronage because it operates where taxis do not ply?	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	27	13.9
Disagree	3	1.5
Neither agree nor disagree	41	21.1
Agree	64	33.030.0
Strongly agree	59	30.4
Total	194	100.0
Okada business is viable method of reducing poverty and you empowerment?	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	9	4.6
Disagree	29	14.9
Neither agree nor disagree	31	16.0
Agree	102	52.6
Strongly agree	23	11.9
Total	194	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2011)

The table above shows that there is reasonable level of income in okada operation as indicated by (43.8%) of riders in the study areas. The income so generated from the industry has made it a viable source of employment. This is indicated by (56.2%) of the okada riders. The high patronage of commercial motorcycle in the study areas was associated with the fact that okada operations do exist in places outside the coverage of taxis, which is very important to human existence. This is indicated by (33.0%) of the okada riders. Subsequently, the substantial patronage of okada business in the study areas reflects the amount of financial returns from the business. In other words, okada business has relatively high return in financial gains as indicated by (38.1%) of the riders. This benefits so associated with commercial motorcycle makes it a viable source for youth empowerment and instrument for poverty eradication. As put in the words of respondents:

Ever since I have been in okada business, I have been able to pay my children's school fees, feed my family. It is cheap to maintain. It fetches money than commercial taxis. I was once a taxi driver. There high money in okada business (interview, okada rider, Sango, March 201). Okada is my only source of income. It has improved my standard of living as a graduate. In less than two years in the business I have acquired land for building. The business is good (IDI/okada rider/Orogun/ March 2011).

It is obvious from all indication of responses that okada business is vital and functional to the economic value of the riders in the study areas. This buttresses preceding argument of Adeniji (2009) on the need for government to sustain the industry, though with reasonable level of regulation that could check abuse and excesses of riders.

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Table 4: Distribution of Respondents Views on the Challenges Associated with Okada Operations

There is high level of accident in commercial motorcycle operation?	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	148	76.3
Disagree	27	13.9
Neither agree nor disagree	8	4.1
Agree	11	5.7
Total	194	100.0
There is indiscriminate arrest of operators by law enforcement agents?	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	28	14.4
Disagree	38	19.6
Neither agree nor disagree	47	24.2
Agree	70	36.1
Strongly agree	11	5.7
Total	194	100.0
The use of helmet for both rider and commuter is challenging?	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	31	16.0
Disagree	26	13.4
Neither agree nor disagree	31	16.0
Agree	90	46.4
Strongly agree	16	8.2
Total	194	100.0
Reckless attitude of taxis drivers/private cars is a serious problem to okada operation?	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	28	14.4
Disagree	6	3.1
Neither agree nor disagree	3	1.5
Agree	70	36.1
Strongly agree	87	44.8
Total	194	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2011)

The table above identified various challenges confronting okada operations in the study areas. These range from indiscriminate arrest by law enforcement agents indicated by (36.1%) of the riders to compliance to use of helmet by both rider and passenger (46.4%); indiscriminate abuse of riders by passengers (37.1%); and reckless attitude of vehicle of drivers (44.8%) respectively in the views of okada riders. According to a respondent:

What okada faced in the in the hands of police is not good. They arrest us without any tangible offence. The police delayed and disturbed our business just in the name of collecting bribery. Though some okada riders do have license to operate, yet the police arrest everybody without any offence. Many vehicle drivers do have fear of God at all. They do show consideration for okada man. They are too careless. Drivers are the major cause of okada accident on the high way (IDI/okada rider/Sango/March 2011)

On the aspect of high rate of accident associated with okada operation, most riders (76.3%) in the study areas strongly disagreed with the trend. This may not be unconnected with observation of the riders expressed in in-depth interviews. According to an okada operator:

The problem of okada accident is mainly caused by the impatient attitude of motor drivers. They over-speed on high way and this makes them to lose control which sometimes results in collision with okada motorcycle (ID/, okada union chairman/Apete/March 2011).

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However, in another dimension, a respondent expressed his opinion thus:

There is high rate of accident in okada operation. The riders are too careless, rough and impatient. They disobeyed traffic law with flagrance. They over-speed on high ways, lost control of the machine, which result in fatal accident (IDI/Road Safety Official/Ibadan/March 2011).

Further, a police officer said:

Okada riders hardly obey the government regulation. They don't stop for traffic control light or traffic warden given signals and any other road regulations. They ride recklessly without particulars (IDI/Police/Sango/ March 2011).

The preceding view of the law enforcement agent corroborates with the observation of Solagberu (2006) on the high rate of accident in okada operations. Though okada riders may be careless by all indications, what is needed to be done is regulation that covers all road users to address the level of risk associated with commercial motorcycle.

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY OKADA RIDERS IN COPING WITH GOVERNMENT BAN

The goal of the objective was to identify alternatives or options available to okada riders in coping with government ban in the study areas.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents Views on the Coping Strategies

Are your commercial activities affected by government ban?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	183	94.3
No	11	5.7
Total	194	100.0
Are you considering shifting your business?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	173	89.2
No	21	10.8
Total	194	100.0
What alternative do you think will help cope with the ban?	Frequency	Percentage
Government to implement another law	25	12.9
Unban okada	72	37.1
Alternative routes	11	5.7
Provision of job	16	8.2
Education and enlightenment	40	20.6
Total	194	100.0
Are you considering shifting to your original skill?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	152	78.4
No	42	21.6
Total	194	100.0
Can you survive without commercial motorcycle?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	156	80.4
No	38	19.6
Total	194	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2011)

The table above shows that most *okada* riders (94.3%) in the study areas whose operations were affected by government considered shifting their business location. In this wise, about (89.2%) of the riders considered shifting to alternative routes, though the rate was higher for riders in Orogun (23.7%), and lowest in Apete (21.1%) and Mokola (21.1%). The alternatives suggested by riders in the study areas as a means of surviving the government ban ranged from reformation of existing law (12.9%) to accommodate the economic interest of the riders to special route for *okada* riders (5.7%), provision of job (8.2%),

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and education to enlighten the illiterate riders (20.6%). It is obvious that most riders (78.4%) in the study locations were considering returning to their former original skill as viable alternative. As put in the words of a rider:

I don't think I am longer interested in this business. The daily income is falling due to police arrest and harassment from Road Safety officials. I want to return to my original skill. I am a radio technician. You see, the problem is electricity light. Government should help us improve the electricity situation in Nigeria (IDI/ okada rider/Mokola/March 2011)

Furthermore, most okada riders (80.4%) in the study areas asserted that they could survive without commercial motorcycle, but dependent on certain conditions. The notable condition identified was to be self employed, that is starting a personal business. This is indicated by (50.0%) of the riders. A respondent succinctly put:

If there is enough capital to start business, do you think I will be here? I am only in this business to make money which will allow me start up a business. I am a graduate without source of income. I have approached different commercial banks for loans, yet nothing seemed coming. I decided to be in this business. I am not happy for being here. I have no option because I must survive (IDI/okada rider/Orogun/ March 2011).

Thus, it is apparent that there are alternatives by which okada riders in the study areas could overcome government ban. It is however worrisome to think how successful some alternatives might be. For instance, the desire to be self employed and returning to former training skills are important in this context. Are there available financial capitals to start such business? Or will income from the okada operation be sufficient to off business in the face of strict ban on okada? What is the condition of electricity in Nigeria? These are major areas of concern that should be considered when thinking alternative strategies of survival for okada operators.

Table 7: Chi-square Test of Association between Respondents views on Satisfaction with Okoda Business and Profitability of the Business

Are you satisfied in this business?		Do you think commercial motorcycle is profitable?		
		Yes	No	Total
Yes	Observed	54	0	54
	Expected	42.9	11.1	54.0
No	Observed	100	40	140
	Expected	111.1	28.9	140.0
		154	40	194

Calculated value = 19.436; Critical value = 3.84; Df =1; Probability value = 0.000; Decision = 0.05 level of significant

Since the calculated value (19.436) is greater than the Critical value (3.84) the test for satisfaction and profitability is significant at 0.05 probability level. Therefore, the factors that motivated the commercial motor cycle riders across the selected locations were significant. The notable factor is the profit motive or income generated by the riders. Though the level of satisfaction is low, the generated income tends to supersede perceived challenges that confronted okada riders in the study areas. Hence motivation in the business of commercial motor cycle is the function of income that accrues to riders. This is obvious in the demographic distribution for okada riders.

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CONCLUSION

It is apparent in the data analysis of the study that commercial motorcycle operation in the study areas was vital to economic need of the riders as a source of youth empowerment and instrument of poverty reduction or eradication. The business is not only functional to meet the need of family of the riders; it is also obvious that okada operation tends to complement means of transportation to a greater extent in the study areas. Hence, the socio-economic benefit of the sector is enormous as it serves as source of empowerment and employment to graduates and ease of transportation movement among commuters in the study areas. Therefore, the significance of commercial motorcycle business, especially for study locations is enormous, though this was not without challenges that tend to hinder smooth operation. Hence, based on the empirical data information of the study, the central conclusion is that the emergence of commercial motorcycle as a mean of transportation in the study areas and beyond, is functional to the survival of the social system of society. Though there are challenges that confront such functionality, the viable solution may not necessarily be outright imposition of ban on high way road. Rather there should be collaboration among stakeholders (government agencies, motor drivers, and motorcycle riders) toward promoting decent attitude that is crucial to sustain safety of all road users. This must be vital in order sustain the economy of okada operators and safety of users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The empirical data of the study revealed significant facts on the nature of commercial motorcycle operation, especially in the study areas. Therefore, based on these facts, the study draws upon the following recommendations.

1. The central motivation for engagement in okada business is unemployment and infrastructural constraint such as eclectic power supply. To reduce the spate of commercial motorcycle operation on the high way roads therefore, is to provide job opportunities for youths or regular power supply sustainable to growth of business/industry.
2. 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 transportation means in areas commercial motor vehicle taxis/buses can not cover. Therefore, any imposition of government ban should take into consideration the plurality of users' interest.
3. Although okada riders would prefer shifting to their original skills or aptitude as a coping strategy to overcome government imposition of ban which hinders efficiency of business, there should be provision of infrastructures such as stable power supply or financial capital that will thrive the desire for self employment and sufficiency.

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