



## SECURITY AND SAFETY CHALLENGES OF COMMERCIAL MOTORCYCLING (OKADA) IN IBADAN: INTERROGATING INFORMAL TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC SURVIVAL

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### ABSTRACT

*This article examines the safety and security of intra-urban okada transport in Ibadan within the framework of informality. The paper argues that the okada phenomenon is one of the multifarious manifestations of informal economy in Nigeria in general and in Ibadan in particular. Informality is invoked as theoretical framework. The study sourced data from three major ways namely: key informant interviews, participant observation and case study approach. The study adopted a case study research design. The study area was Ibadan, the Oyo State capital. The study population comprises the total number of registered motorcycle riders in the six local governments within the Ibadan metropolis and the residents selected for this study. The sample population comprised 36 commercial motorcyclists from different points across the six local government areas under study, 24 executives of commercial motorcyclists, 24 residents/commuters of the selected communities, 2 traditional bone setters and 2 staff at the accident and emergency ward of the University Teaching Hospital (UCH). Based on data analysis and discussion the paper submits that it not disputable that okada riding has over the years generated negative externalities; yet it has been a viable source of employment opportunities for thousands of people in Ibadan and other major cities in Nigeria. The paper notes that owners of private okada are the safest and most secure group of trip makers, whereas commercial motorcycle riders, passengers and pedestrians are the most vulnerable groups that are exposed to crimes and crashes respectively. The challenges of safety and security challenges of okada could be minimized if agencies responsible for traffic control and management could initiate and activate pro-active safety and security measures. Okada riding has become embedded into Ibadan's socio-economic fabric, which implies that policy option that will be used to manage it must be tailored towards win-win outcomes for both the establishment and the riders. Any policy option that does not prioritize a win-win outcome will distort the political order and economic stability. The point at issue is that okada riding could co-exist with the vehicular mode of transportation within the ambit of law. The minimum requirement is for the policy makers to design appropriate mass transportation policy for the city, through the design of multi-modal transportation system. This could as well be backed with effective regulation of okada riding within Ibadan city.*

**Keywords:** *Okada, security, safety, informality, transportation and economic survival*

### INTRODUCTION

Volumes of published academic papers on commercial motorcycling, called *okada* in Nigeria, could be majorly classified into two schools of thought, one of the perspectives characterizes *okada* phenomenon as a social menace that needs to be curtailed; the other perspective paints *okada* as a symptomatic condition of failed government's ability to provide adequate transport infrastructure. African cities, especially Nigerian cities have been characterized as informal cities due to massive non-regulated transportation and housing provisioning. The chaotic and pervasive conversion of urban spaces to commercial/productive spaces by un-employed and economically disadvantaged groups, are one the effects of ineffective governing capacities in African cities. *Okada* and street trading are the two most dominant narratives in the discourses of informal economy. As Steck (2008) notes informal economy is a paradox, having functional socio-economic benefits that are coexisting with negative externalities of spatial disorder and congestion in urban space. However with right policy interventions, the trade-off could be

managed so that social economic benefits of *okada* riding could be optimized, spatial disorder tokenized and security and safety matters catered for.

Transport system is a basic and critical infrastructure supporting daily life and economic activities of nations, since the days of Industrial Revolution transportation of goods and services have been the lifeblood of societal economic activities. In different climes, transportation is provided across range of networks. However, these networks or systems are often threatened and in turn threaten the security of different climes where they exist. This is because transport systems have challenged security in its holistic conceptualisation. Thus, there is a strong link between security of lives and property in a society and its transport system. In Nigeria, commercial motorcycling is an important component of the transport system which in a way constitutes threats the security of the society, and at the same time it is creating opportunities for thousands of people to earn a living. This dilemma needs innovative government intervention to be addressed. To a large extent, *Okada* has played an important role in cushioning the negative effects of the falling standard of living, social inequalities, urbanisation and inadequate urban transport system in Nigeria in general and Ibadan in particular.

Ibadan, the focus of this study is considered as one of the largest cities and one of the most rapidly growing urban metropolises in Nigeria, The transport system in the city has showed several dysfunctional features that threaten the security of the society. The rapid urbanisation of its metropolitan area coupled with seemingly non-existent development master plans, has degenerated into numerous transportation and security issues. These problems range from complex traffic gridlocks, to the deteriorating situation of roads, discomfort of road-based public transport, high level of crime, growing rate of road accidents and increased emission and atmospheric pollution alongside the growing menace of motorcycle operators.

Despite the burgeoning literature on commercial motorcycle as a mode of transport, little attention has been made to explore the connection between commercial motorcycling operation and commuters' security and safety in Ibadan Metropolis in Oyo State. In other words, few attempts have been made to understand the relationship between security/safety challenges of commercial motorcycling (*Okada*) in Ibadan and urban informality. This is the main gap the study sets out to fill. Arising from the foregoing, this study will examine the following, research questions: What are the security challenges associated with commercial motorcycling in Ibadan? To what extent does the operation of commercial motorcycles undermine commuters' security and safety in Ibadan? And what is the place of *okada* in the informality narratives?

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

This section defines the terms used in this study so as to remove the problem of misconception and misinterpretation of concepts.

**Commercial motorcycling (*Okada*):** This refers to the two-tyred automobile machine or carrier that moves people from one place to another. It provides space for two persons, including the rider. When such carrier is used as source of income to the owner, it is called commercial motorcycle. The commercial purpose of the automobile defined constitutes the basis of this study.

**Human security:** This refers to the protection of the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedom and human fulfilment. It means protecting fundamental freedoms—freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity. It argues that, a people-centred view of security is necessary for global, regional, national and community stability. Its various components include; “economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security” (UNDP Report, 1994).

**Ibadan Metropolis:** This refers to the geographic space comprising six local government areas namely: Ibadan North, Akinyele LGA, Ibadan North West, Ibadan North East, Ibadan South West Local Governments and Ibadan South East.

**Informality:** Government establishments generally define informality as an economic activity that is mainly un-regulated, un-monitored, non-standardized and non-licensed by statutory bodies.

### **Literature Review**

Transportation of man, his property, goods and services are essential in the economic and social development of any nation. The Federal Government of Nigeria's National Transport Policy states that a properly functioning and well planned transport structure can engender speedy development and sustainably augment citizens' standard of living (NTP, 2010). It is believed such system can permit transactions between buyers and sellers to operate by making possible the seamless conveyance of goods and individuals. Against this premise, transportation provides very important connections between locations, enhance social interaction. Without transportation systems, little opportunities will exist for job creation, health, education and other developmental services; while also alleviating regional inequality by fostering national integration. Furthermore, it supports economic development facilitating access to labour and other resources for the realisation of national comparative advantages. Studies in the area of urban transportation confirmed that more than 75% of population in cities depended on public transport while about 25% depend on private transport system” (Onatere-Ubrurhe, 2016). In the past, the use of motorcycle was restricted to serving family transportation need, mostly associated with middle income earners. In the rural communities, possession of a motorcycle was a mark of class differential between the well-to-do and those not well-to-do.

Use of motorcycles commercially for transportation and other related activities in Nigeria first appeared in Cross River State in the early 1970. Its popularity as a vocation was further strengthened as a result of mass retrenchment of workers nationwide in 1975/76 (Adesanya, 1998:26). However, Ogunsanya and Galtima (1993) underscored that records have also claimed motorcycles were first introduced as a commercial transport in Yola the capital of Adamawa precisely same period it started in Calabar. By 1980, mercantile motorcycles had spread to

several states going by different names such as *okada*, *going*, *kabukabu*, *achapa*, *keke* and so on.

In 1988, in Benin, commercial motorcycling was accepted and it became a steady source of income for local entrepreneurs that do hire their fleet of motorcycles to riders (Nehi, 2012). *Okada*, as widely speculated, was derived from the now defunct Okada Air in Okada, close to Benin City, due to the local familiarity with the airline at that time (Nehi, 2012). The governments' inability to provide jobs for the unemployed has prompted many jobless people to take to commercial motorcycle operation. Today, everyone from all walks of life even the retired are involved in commercial motorcycle business as a means of livelihood. The emergence of *Okada* as an alternative means of transport brought a relief of sorts to the inadequate transport system (Iginla, 2007; Ikuomola, Okunola and Heap, 2009).

The Amalgamated Commercial Motorcycle Riders Association of Nigeria (ACOMORAN) and the All Nigerian Auto Bike Commercial Owners and Workers Association (ANACOWA) are the existing active associations of coordinating and protecting the interest of mercantile riders in Nigeria. Operators of commercial motorcycles formed various associations and unions across the nation at state and national levels. Individuals prepared to make a living as commercial motorcyclists are required to enlist with the transport associations and unions.

The emergence of the commercial motorcycle is a good experience as it has proved to be a source of income for the army of hitherto idle persons; it has helped to cushion the influence of the ineffective transportation system in the county. Commercial motorcycles are the best available alternatives in most Nigerian cities and neighbourhoods where roads are not properly maintained and where perennial traffic gridlock is part of daily life. The highest population of commercial motorcycles is found in cities like Lagos, Ibadan, Benin, Port-Harcourt, and Kano. Commenting on the phenomenon of *Okada* operators in Lagos State, Yaqub (2011) notes that:

...the menace posed by *Okada* operators in the state is causing a whirling vortex of emotion in the citizens (sic). Even though the menace is causing disquiet all over the federation, it has provided jobs for the teeming populace; this advantage places the government in a dilemma as regards how to tackle the concomitant problems. It is definitely not an easy task to find an alternative source of employment that could replace the *Okada* business in the country for now (*National Life*, December 17, 2011:36).

Despite this very seeming positive contribution of this mode of transport to the transportation sub-sector, it nevertheless poses serious challenge to society. Accidents and fatalities associated with this mode of transport have been on the increase as evidence from many hospitals across urban centres in Nigeria reveal. According to studies, the motorcycle related accident prevalence rate range from between 12.8% and 60% (Sydney, 2003; Okedare, 2004; Aniekan and Okeniyi *et al.*, 2005; Nzegwu *et al.*, 2008). . Earlier researches in Nigeria indicated that injuries to the head and other extremities leads to morbidity and death (Ekere and Ibeanusi, 2003; Oluwadiya *et al.*, 2004).

“Incidence of reported cases of road traffic accident at Igbobi Orthopaedic Hospital had a 3000% increase in number of patients with fractured limbs” (Idika and Sanni, 2004).

Nevertheless, there is an increasing preoccupation in scholarship to understand the implications of commercial motorcycling for the Nigerian society (Oluranti, 2011; NTP, 2010; Ola, 2012; Peter, 2013; NAN, 2013; Olaniyi, 2013). Consequently, this growing interest contextualises the climate of a failed transport system in Nigeria, the collapsed infrastructure and disillusionment among urban dwellers which led to the emergence of *Okada* business (Olaniyi, 2013). Therefore, several nuanced and scholarly writings have highlighted the relationships between rapid urbanisation and the transport system including *okada* business (Olaoba, 2002; Ogunbodede, 2008; Ikuomola, Okunola and Heap, 2009; Olaniyi, 2013). Thus, the literature on urban transport system have emphasised that over 75% of the city population depend on public transport (Ogunbodede, 2008:9). Moreover, three major themes dominate the literature of transport system and security in Nigeria. One, several studies have explored the evolution of *okada* business in Nigeria (Ogunsanya and Galtima, 1993; Adesanya, 1998; Ikuomola, Okunola and Heap, 2009; Ogunrinola, 2011). Two, others have drawn the connections between increasing urbanisation, economic downturn, migration, crime and the transport system including *okada* (Momoh, 2000; Olaoba, 2002; Okojie, 2003; Ogunbodede, 2008; Lourdes, Plat, Pochet and Sahgbana, 2010; Olaniyi, 2013). Three, some others have highlighted the rivalry and competition as well as health challenges raised by *okada* business in Nigeria (Ekere and Ibeanusi, 2003; Idika and Sanni, 2004; Oluwadiya *et al.*, 2004).

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### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The elasticity of the notion of informality has made its conceptualization susceptible to multifarious contextual meanings and interpretations. Government establishments generally define informality as an economic activity that is mainly un-regulated, un-monitored, non-standardized and non-

licensed by statutory bodies. In African cities okada is one of the major dimensions of informality. In essence, a licensed and certified use of public space as productive space is therefore legal. However, un-licensed and un-certified use of public space for gaining economic reward constitutes illegal economic activity. Okada is therefore could be conceptualized as illegal or non-illegal conversion of public domain to production spaces for economic survival. Chen, et.al (2002) classifies narratives of informal economy into three broad categories namely: dualists, structuralists and legalists account. According to the dualists the informal sector is a strategy for survival for the economically excluded who could not secure job in the formal sector. This notion has been popularized by study of ILO (1972).

However, the argument of the dualists that informal sector is not directly linked to formal sector has been deflated by Chen, et.al. 'Contrary to the dualist perspective, most segments of the informal economy have direct production, trade, or service links with the formal economy (Chen, et.al 2002:7). To the structuralists informal sector is another dimension of capitalists' exploitation which is realized by the transformation of employment relations. In the transformed mode of production, distribution and exchange, the part of the cost of production is externalized to the disadvantage of informal workers (micro entrepreneurs, and traders) who are at the receiving end of the transformed employment relations. The neoliberal turn irreversibly transformed the employment relations, through which millions of people were disengaged from their work places with the neoliberal policies of rationalization, downsizing/right sizing. Apart from that, get jobs in the formal sectors has become more difficult as States have adopted neoliberal thought of minimal state as against big state that prioritize full employment of the citizens. David Harvey (2008), is one of the top scholars in the structuralist school of thought on informality, he contends that:

From their inception, cities have arisen through geographical and social concentrations of a surplus product. Urbanization has always been, therefore, a class phenomenon, since surpluses are extracted from somewhere and from somebody, while the control over their disbursement typically lies in a few hands. This general situation persists under capitalism, of course; but since urbanization depends on the mobilization of a surplus product, an intimate connection emerges between the development of capitalism and urbanization. Capitalists have to produce a surplus product in order to produce surplus value; this in turn must be reinvested in order to generate more surplus value. The result of continued reinvestment is the expansion of surplus production at a compound rate—hence the logistic curves (money, output and population) attached to the history of capital accumulation, paralleled by the growth path of urbanization under capitalism. (2008:24).

For Harvey therefore, the contested public spaces between the regulators (national/sub-national) states and the street-based workers represent another dimension of class struggle between the rich and the poor. Okada riders and street traders are the street-based workers who have illegally converted public spaces to production spaces for economic survival. Harvey mobilizes the notion

of the right to the city as the viable strategy for preventing public space being 'colonized' to the exclusion of informal workers. On the other hand, the legalists interpret the manifestation of informal economy as a logical reaction by the economically-disadvantaged to governance institutional deficiency. The institutional factors have two components; first it relates to complexity and high cost of starting a formal business imposed by the governments' bureaucratic and regulatory machinery. De Soto, (1990) is a leading scholar in this perspective. The other side of institutional factor is the extreme opposite of excessive and expensive regulatory regime; this is the inability of the state institutions to perform statutory functions expected of them. This has been framed as state-absenteeism.

However, the most trenchant explication of the deficient governing capacity of governmental institutions and how it leads to proliferation of informality in transportation, trading and housing has been provided by Bayat (1997). Talking about context in which encroachers (squatters/street vendors) operate, Bayat asserts that they:

...take advantage of undermined state power at times of crisis (following a revolution, war or economic breakdown) to spread further and entrench their position. In brief, the protagonists exploit the three opportunities –crisis, bribing and invisibility- allowing them to remain tolerable when in fact multiplying.” (1997: 62).

The three perspectives are more complementary than contradictory, each of them provides analytical lens through which the complexity of informality could be understood. However, for this purpose of this paper, we shall align with the both dualists' and legalists' perspectives. We concur with the dualists that emergence of *okada* in Nigeria and in Ibadan in particular is the rational alternative to those who could not gain employment in the formal sector of the economy. *Okada* has also become a viable alternative for artisans looking to make fast/daily money, by extension, it also serve as temporary avenue of raising money to start a new business or trade.

According to Akanji (2018), Nigeria's informal sector constitutes about 75% of the entire working population, of which both *okada* riders and street trader constitute the biggest slice of the entire informal sector workers. In the same vein, he argues that the contributions of the informal sector to national economy and growth are often been neglected, grossly un-calculated, or incorrectly calculated (Akanji, 2008). This study in aligning with Akanji (2008) and Akanji (2018) contends that *okada* riding is a viable alternative form of employment, whose safety and security limitations could be tokenized and become formalized so that it will run not in opposition to the formal mode of transportation.

## **METHODOLOGY, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The context in which *okada* became dominant a popular mode of transportation in Nigeria and Ibadan in particular is traceable to worsened economic situation in 1980s during which SAPs was introduced in many African states. The economic hardship of 1980s, the post SAP era and paucity

of employment opportunities have made many jobless Ibadan residents to opt for okada riding as a means of survival. It must be noted that as economic austerity becomes intensive, a great number of people moved from the rural parts of Oyo state and south-west Nigeria to Ibadan. Hence, the period of economic hardship also witnessed sporadic influx of millions of people to Ibadan in search of greener pastures. *Okada* riding in Ibadan therefore provides safety net not only to the riders as source of employment and income, but it also serve as viable alternative to dysfunctional government-regulated public transportation. Since the pervasive economic hardship of 1990s *okada* riding has been systematically embedded into Ibadan's socio-economic context, thus creating a situation where informality has *defacto* becomes normality without legal framework legalizing it.

### **Commuters' security and safety associated with commercial motorcycling in Ibadan**

Safety is used widely in the framework of protection from personal harm. It is described to mean an assurance of safety from all insecurities and hazardous conditions which may lead to injury and other serious health challenges (Lawal, 2008). It is a protection against injury and traumatic issues (Miller, 1982). Related terms are often used when discussing safety.

People-centred approach to security concept identifies the dichotomies of individuality and universality of personal freedom as well as individual and collective rights. Many actors contribute to the security approach such as the security providers (McRae, & Don, 2001). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report of 1994 made an effort to identify the conceptual development in security calculus following the decline of the bipolar threat of the Cold War when it contends that the narrow interpretation of security is the protection of country from aggression or preservation of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of nuclear threats. Security is related to geographical territories over individuals. As a result of this, security embodies protection from disease, malnutrition, social injustices, political repression, environmental hazards, and terrorism, terrorism (Human Development Report 1994: 22-23).

According to the Human Development Report (1994), security is defined as "people's safety from chronic threats and protection from sudden hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life." In the early nineties, the conception of security was established. However, learned discussion pertaining to this is yet to agree on a common definition of the term. There are two main approaches to security namely the broad and narrow approaches. While the broad approach main focus is on the essential hub of all human lives, the narrow approach focuses on the outcome of armed conflict as well as dangers civilians face by despotic governments' in addition to state failure (Heinbecker, 2000).

Regardless of the approach to security, the seven dimensions of security remain key features of the definition. These are: (i) Economic Security, (ii) Environmental Security, (iii), Food Security, (iv) Health Security, (v) Political Security, (vi) Personal Security, (vii) Community Security (Human Development Report, 1994).

Nevertheless, among the above dimensions, personal security is a greater challenge facing commuters as they move from one place to the other using commercial motorcycles as mobility. Nowadays, the issue of personal safety is even more important not only for the community at



large, but has also been indispensable condition for commuters when they travel. Hence, the importance of access to safe transportation cannot be over-emphasized. However, regardless of where they go and the distance covered, commuters believed to be exposed to different levels of risk or crime (Hägerstrand, 1972). Some of the risks that will be discussed in this section are two, namely institutional constraints and criminality problems.

### **Institutional constraints and commercial motorcycle operation**

Poor implementation of motorcycle operating policy in Nigeria over the years has remained one of the causes of motorcycle accidents (Oyesiku, 2001). The constraints in the implementation of this directive are both attributed to culture and religion. Particularly for Nigeria and many countries in West Africa, the greater significance of direct government intervention in the policy initiatives on motorcycle operation relates to the poor management of public transportation systems in both the metropolitan and intermediate cities with rapidly growing population. The weaknesses in the existing structure regarding the difficulty of poor co-ordination are between transport and land use and between physical planning and infrastructure development. There are no structural plans or even master plans for physical development of most cities in the country. Thus, there is hardly any specific land allocation made that could be critical to the sound development of the nations' transport network.

Transport regulators in Nigeria and specifically in Ibadan metropolis are generally weak, with insufficient capacity, resulting to unfavourable atmosphere for transportation provisions. Ineffectiveness in traffic law enforcement by the FRSC and other law enforcement organisations is seen as the main motivation for careless driving within Ibadan metropolis. According to Huang *et al.*, (2006), the officers are only interested in extorting money from motorists who commit traffic-related offences without punishing them. Consequently, commercial motorcyclists are often faced with social stigmatisation and harassment from law enforcement officers with unlawful arrest by police officers because of bribe and corruption (Olubomehin 2012; Akpan *et al.*, 2011). In contrast to the above statement, a police officer said:

It is far from truth that police officers and other law enforcement agents arrest commercial motorcyclists for no just cause. They are arrested when they have violated the law. Majority of the commercial motorcyclists do not have good driving experience, rider's license, and rides unregistered motorcycle as well as they use to take alcohol (referred to as *Paraga or Sepe*) when operating during the day. Therefore, they are often unaware of traffic rules and signs, and tend to overestimate their driving abilities which put them in trouble (Interview, at Eleyele police station, 12, March, 2017).

The deduction that could be made from the above results and comments is that only few of the commercial motorcyclists are law abiding and have not been arrested for violating any of the traffic law and regulations in the study area. While majority of those that have been arrested for non-compliance with the traffic laws and regulations see the law enforcement officials (i.e., the police

and road safety officials etc.) as antagonists and unfriendly set of people. On the other hand, it was obvious from the interviews that traffic rules were violated frequently. The failure of the safety system made the learning of traffic codes tricky for riders; this is complicated by law enforcement agents who fail to explain the details of the crime committed to violating riders. This makes riders violate the same laws repeatedly. Commenting on this, a respondent noted:

Majority of riders did not go to school. The officers will now arrest you for offence and tick a document for you to pay money as fine. Many will just pay the money to avoid their motorcycle from being seized not knowing why they were arrested in the first place. (Interview at Challenge Junction, 16 March, 2017).

Irrefutably, one can conclude from the above response that poor law enforcement is becoming a daily practice in Ibadan. This issue may have encouraged risk-taking among motorcycle operators. According to the informants, security operatives were interested in extorting money from riders rather than ensuring that they comply with traffic rules to ensure safety; this factor contributed to making risk-taking totally satisfactory. For instance, it was noted by one of the respondents:

Most of the times when we are on the road, police officers harass us. They will not even ask us to bring our particulars but they are only interested in collecting money from us. The money they collect are too much. Most time, they ask for one thousand Naira or more. Anything less is trouble (Interview at Challenge, 16, March, 2017).

This liberal situation added to the riders' risk-taking disposition as they were certain that all they needed to do whenever they were arrested for traffic-related offences was to bribe the officers and the case would be settled. According to a respondent:

The police should be blamed for most of the accident. Because they have collected money, they will not arrest *okada* operators who carry overload or ride carelessly. Many of these things they overlook are the cause of accidents (Interview at Challenge, 16, March, 2017).

On the persistent levy from the state and local government agents, majority of the commercial motorcyclists (*Okada*) experienced incessant levy from the state and local government revenue agents. Investigating the issue further, a respondent said:

The issue of levy is one of the problems facing this *Okada* business. We paid multiple levies to state and local governments and our unions on daily basis. For instance, I spent close to 400 naira for the collection of rider's tickets and other permits daily, excluding the monthly association dues of 500 naira (Interview at Challenge junction, 16 March, 2017).

Another interviewee stated:

There was a protest over the increase in the daily levy by some commercial motorcyclists. This has become more rampant these days. It is not possible to protest too long for many operators as they depend on whatever they make in a day to feed their family and themselves...I think the issue of levy is a critical challenge that needs urgent address in Ibadan (Interview at Challenge junction, 16 March, 2017).

The deduction that could be made from the above responses and comments is that commercial motorcyclists are obliged to pay multiple tax and levies in the course of operations which often affect their expected daily income and earnings. As result of this, majority of commercial motorcyclists in the study area work round the clock as well as embarked on frequent public protest with social and economic implications.

Transport unions have not been performing their expected roles regarding commercial motorcycling transportation in Ibadan metropolis. As a result, some routes lack parking stations, and where they exist, they are awkwardly located and usually small in size, causing random picking and dropping of passengers which equally puts the life of the operators and the passengers at risk considering the poor environment into which they are exposed to. The consequences of this dangerous built environment are encouraged by the poor performance of road safety officers and the traffic police.

### **Criminality Problems in Commercial Motorcycle Transport**

A very serious nexus exists between the operation of commercial motorcycle and criminality. News abounds of various types of criminal activities carried out on or with commercial motorcycles over time, and is a challenge to genuine riders, commuters as well as policy makers. The alarming rate of criminal activities in Nigeria was reported by the *Times International* of London (1985). In addition, statements were issued by The Travel Warning United States Department of Bureau of Consular Affairs on insecurity of public transport in the country, especially for foreign persons. They further warned their citizens to refrain from night travels, poor public transport, decayed infrastructure and driving conditions.

Unfortunately, the use of “*Okada*” to perpetrate crimes including stealing of personal effects such as money, bags, phones, among others, as well as cases of kidnapping, murder and rape are increasing. As a matter of fact, over the years, both motorcycle operators and commuters have been attacked in major towns of Ibadan. An interviewee stated:

Indeed, motorcycles are often used for criminal acts like snatching of purses and other belongings like phones, bags, as well as kidnapping, including rape of innocent people. Those who carry out such criminal acts are people of questionable character and criminal minded riders who are not genuine commercial motorcyclists because they use

unregistered motorcycles to carry out the evil act (Interview at Oje, 23 March, 2017).

This issue seemed to be common in many areas of Ibadan as another respondent gave a similar account.

Criminals are among riders. They usually take innocent passengers who do not know the routes to isolated spots where they rob and rape them usually in the morning or late in the night (Interview at Mokola Roundabout, March 15, 2017).

The above finding supports the observation of a discussion organised by the Ministry of Transport in Lagos State which revealed that there have been cases of motorcycles (*Okada*) being used by armed robbers to deprive the citizens of their lifelong investments and valuable property. This is true of some cities in Nigeria where *Okada* has been banned from operation at certain period of the day (nigerianewsworld.com, 30 April, 2011). On the other hand, there have been some cases in which the perpetrators of the crime are not the motorcycle operators. A motorcycle operator narrated his experience:

I witnessed one this year in the night around 8pm, I did not know where the lady was coming from but I guess she is new in town. She called the person so that the person will direct me while I parked my motorcycle at our unit. I went nearby to ease myself. Suddenly, she saw two men on a motorcycle that came towards her and wanted to grab her phone, and then she shouted *ole! ole!!* (Interview at Mokola Roundabout, 23, March, 2017).

Investigating the issue further, a respondent working with the NURTW at Mokola Roundabout stated:

This assertion is correct but I would want to let you know that most of those who perpetrate criminal activities are those who do not have attachment or registered with any affiliated unit. One of the major responsibilities of the association is to prevent criminals from joining the business (Interview with *Okada* chairman at Mokola roundabout, 25 March, 2017).

Corroborating the above findings, Ola (2012) stated that motorcycles are used to commit different forms of crimes in Ibadan metropolis. He reported one of such cases where five men were arrested in the city of Ibadan while another set of armed robbers were caught while robbing a Lebanese in Ibadan on a motorcycle. In a related event, three policemen were killed in Lagos by a gang operating on motorcycles (News up-date, 2013). In a similar vein, information from the Cross Rivers State Police Command showed that 1, 352 commercial motorcyclists were arrested for crime-related offences ranging from stealing of handsets, handbags as well as cases of rape and unlawful possession of arms between January and December 2008. Individuals are usually

dispossessed of their belongings at gun point or suffer indelible cut with the use of cutlass (Silas, 2006). Similarly, Yusuf (2013) also reported that three men on a motorcycle killed a 42-year old woman with five children in Lagos State.

Nevertheless, it is pertinent to note that the criminality cases involving commercial motorcyclists in Ibadan and other states in Nigeria seems to share similar characteristics. Another ugly characteristic of the commercial motorcycle operation is the negative group behaviour referred to as 'gang beating'. Some of the operators of commercial motorcycle often act as if they are above the law and when there is an road mishap with vehicle, they are notorious for ganging up to beat up the vehicle driver. Commenting on the issue, Nnadozie (2009) is of the opinion that motorbike riders engage in extreme violent acts and resort to jungle justice so as to shield erring members from facing the law upon recklessly injuring members of the public.

From the above responses, it can be inferred that frequent use of motorcycles for criminal act is one of the major constraints facing the business of commercial motorcycle in Ibadan metropolis. Although, many commercial motorcyclists might have been wrongly charged and punished for crimes they are not guilty for, the reality is that some riders constitute serious threat to the safety of commuters. However, in recent times, this has been curbed through customised identity cards and vests to members that are registered with the association.

Crimes involving commercial motorcyclists have been escalating in the country particularly in Ibadan metropolis (Okoro, 2004; Adebayo, 2008; Aborisade, 2010). The frequency of these crimes is of utmost concern to the government and the masses. Bassey (2009) affirms that "the gradual increase of criminal activities with the use of motorbikes led to loss of lives and properties". Economic crises and unhealthy policies by government has created and aggravated the socio-economic problems of the urban poor. This has led to businesses folding up and mass retrenchment among others (Chikezie, 2006; Sule, 2007). The cost of importing vehicles to meet the increasing demand for mass mode of transport is rather on the high side for many. The few shrewd investors according to Nsa (2007) and Ugboma(2004) "became elitist in providing transport services by insisting on "drop" rather than mass carriage of passengers". Unemployed graduates and experienced employees retrenched from active service resort to the business of motorcycle operation to eke out a living. Akogun (2008) noted that the problems with motorcycle operators include failure to observe traffic regulations, allegation of indulging in criminal activities and being irresponsible. Based on a focus group discussion conducted in this study, participants were asked to describe the types of crimes associated with commercial motorcycle profession in Ibadan metropolis. The responses included:

Crimes that are commonly associates with commercial motorcycles are mob attack, rape, stealing, armed robbery, public nuisance (Focus Group Discussion with Commuters in Apete, 7 March, 2017).

This was buttressed by a respondent during an IDI session.

About eighty-five percent of crimes committed in the streets of Ibadan are traceable to armed bandits who operate with motorcycles either in the morning or late in the night. They act as commercial motorcyclists

and carry passengers to places where they can steal from them (Interview at Oje, 20 March, 2017).

The responses above indicate how motorcyclists carry passengers from one place to another while committing crimes. However, it is pertinent to note that some of the crimes are committed at the bus-stop. Information gathered from respondents during the course of the study confirmed that the existing economic state of the country compelled individuals to change many bus stops to trading places that attracts different individuals. An occupant of a bus stop talking about crime that is related to commercial motorcycling transportation revealed that:

Crimes are very common around here. Everyone is affected. Because many of us cannot afford to rent a shop that is why we bring our market to the bus stop to sell, there is no security at the bus stop, my money has been stolen many times (Interview at Aleshinloye, 17, March, 2017).

However, careful analysis of criminal allegations levelled against motorcyclist in the study area revealed many of the committed offences are against the individual, property and local authority. Inyang (2004) revealed that personal attacks or assaults and other related offences are one of the most common offences in Nigeria. This includes physical assault or harm leading to pain and anguish. On a similar note, Pius (2009) notes that crimes that involve commercial motorcycle operators in some urban centres are often against the individual, and includes rape, abduction, armed robbery, assassination, and the illegal custody of dangerous weapons. Wilful destruction of property is a major crime in Ibadan. This was supported by Siegle (2005) who observed that occasional theft of property is carried out when the opportunity avails itself.

The problem of crime is very common among okada riders, as you can see that they are all young able bodied men. Because many of them spend money on drugs, alcohol and women, the money they get from their business is not enough for them, so they snatch bags and engage in other criminal activities while using okada as cover up. Our station has intervened in many of such cases (Interview with police officer at Molete, 14 March, 2017).

The respondent's observation is that motorcycle operators take part in illegitimate acts, and a member of his family was robbed. This type of crime in recent years has become common everywhere in Nigeria and has been documented. The Federal Bureau of Statistics (2008) notes that between 1999 and 2006, those involved in crime against property in major cities in Nigeria were 27,940. The figure exceeds that of crime against the person during the periods in question which was 16,417 and 8,223 for other offences.

The statistical data is in agreement with Basse (2009) who is of the view that crime against property in the country exceeds crime against persons. Adler *et al* (1995) hinted that stealing is the model of every property offences and is the most prevalent offence in the country. In some parts of the country for instance, it is common to see men of the underworld rob on motorbikes

armed with guns and other dangerous weapons. They not only rob at night and in broad daylight, but also harass, intimidate, and brutalise innocent people, despite the presence of security operatives. A quick look at crime incidence in Ibadan metropolis and criminals indicate that some commercial motorcyclists engage in crime against their passengers and pedestrians by snatching their handbags and phones as well as duping them. Duping of people otherwise referred to as 419 is the most common of all these criminal activities among motorcycle riders and is a major challenge in the country (Chawki, 2009).

From the above it can be proved that commercial motorcycle is used to perpetrate different kind of crimes in many cities in Nigeria. As noted by an interviewee:

Many *Okada* riders do not obey traffic rules. They are very stubborn people and commit all sort of crime such as armed robbery. During the day they will monitor their passengers and in the night they will go and rob them (Interview with Civil Defence official in Molete, 19, March, 2017).

According to the above respondent, commercial motorcyclists breach traffic regulations and engage in robbery particularly at night after close monitoring of their victim during the day. The data collected through interviews showed that criminal activities such as ritual killings, kidnapping, armed robbery, bag snatching are common among commercial motorcycle operators. According to Silas (2006), in every city in the country, presence of commercial motorcycle is synonymous with crime and other illegal offences. Ugboma (2004) averred that the exoneration of commercial motorcyclists from crimes ranging from theft, armed robbery, murder and kidnapping will be difficult considering their in urban centres and their connection with commercial motorcycles.

Among the crimes mentioned by Ugboma, kidnapping is considered as a threat to national security in the contemporary Nigeria. The Nigerian Police for instance apprehended Chukwuduben Onwuamadike, also known as Evans, who had successfully coordinated and masterminded several high profile kidnappings and armed robbery in several parts of the country. However, another case as reported by Peter (2013) was the abduction of the wife of the Deputy Leader of Ebonyi State House of Assembly as well as the abduction of Gombe State lawmaker with a motorcycle as reported by NAN (2013). It has been noticed that some of the qualities that have facilitated the use of commercial motorcycle for transportation are the same qualities that have facilitated their use for anti-social vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping, theft, and so on.

Corroborating the ideas above, Effah's (2005) analysis of prevalent crimes in the Nigerian State identifies assassination, aggravated assault, rape, trafficking, and abduction as some of the crimes against persons that violate their sanctity. Obioha (2004) however identifies this category of crimes as non-property crimes that do not completely rest on economic or property gains. This form of crimes is distinct from property-oriented criminal activities and involves physical injuries to the victims. Nwankwo *et al.*, (2008) note that some of the commercial motorbike operators kidnap their passengers as well as other innocent people for political or economic motives.

According to Effah (2005), politicians employ mercantile motorcyclists to steal ballot boxes and other materials to rig elections as it is easier to flee with motorbikes than motor vehicles.

However, another crime linked with commercial motorcycle operation is offences against officially recognised authority. For instance, Igbo (2007) identifies this category of offences as those that breach the laws enacted by either state or local government authorities in relation to public order as well as environment. Motorcycle riders are noted for violating traffic laws and regulations and such offences include false swearing, bribery and corruption, escape from lawful custody in addition to traffic-related offences. Commenting on the issue, a road safety officer at Molete noted:

Accidents are rampant in this town because majority of the riders are not trained nor have riders' license. Many of them just train behind their houses and look around for hire-purchase merchants who will give them a motorcycle which they will pay back at ridiculous amount. This is why they are desperate and involved in accident all the time (Interview with Police officer at Molete, 19 March, 2017).

From the above interview response, it is clear that lack of training may cause a motorcyclist to violate traffic laws. Corroborating this idea, Akwaowo (2009) is of the view that in nearly every urban centre, Ibadan inclusive, commercial motorcyclists do violate traffic laws with impunity. Hence, if a motorcyclist is untrained, there is likelihood that the person would violate road traffic laws. Therefore, such lack of training might threaten the safety of commuters using motorcycle as a means of transportation.

Commuters' safety is not guaranteed while using commercial motorcycle service which is a rather worrisome issue that has dominated debates involving policy makers and researchers. At present, motorcycle operators engage in criminal activities in many cities across Nigeria including Ibadan. The incidence and nature of crimes are becoming recurrent and frightening, particularly sexual harassment, physical assault, pick-pocketing among others. Every day, people hear news of crimes perpetrated in many Nigerian cities, Ibadan inclusive, with its attendant consequences such as anguish, injuries as well as material damages and loss. To justify this fact, Cozens *et al.*, (2004) and Baker *et al.*, (2001) explained that:

Personal security of commercial motorcycle commuters should be an area of urgent improvement. In fact, it is pertinent to note that commercial motorcycling study has in recent time entered the public consciousness (TRB, 2009).

In newspapers are stories that border on commuters being assaulted or faced with other vices such as pick-pocketing, snatching of valuable properties, rape, and sexual harassment while on public transport. All these vices can lead to grave consequences and thereby undermine commuter's safety. It is disturbing to know that commuter's safety is a serious issue in commercial motorcycling in Ibadan as the commuters are bedevilled with different crimes as aforementioned. In the course of the study during interviews, respondents did not give a clue of being raped but only talked about victims of rape at a point in time. It was indicated that motorcycling transportation



has “led to deaths of innocent people who were victims of rituals” (Interview at Dugbe Road, Ibadan, February 22, 2017).

In addition, in the course of the study respondents indicated that the government gave motorcycle operators a particular time to operate in Ibadan metropolis so as to limit the use of this mode of public transport for unlawful deeds. The respondents however stated that enforcement of this law has proved ineffective as motorcycle operators to some extent violate the regulation. Clearly, a few number of respondents in Apete area of Ibadan stated that “they experienced or were victims of crime when waiting at bus stops to pick commercial motorcycles to their destination” (Interview at Apete area, 12 March, 2017).

Even though crimes occur at different points when on foot to or from a bus stop, it is more obvious while waiting for a public transport at bus stops especially during peak periods and while aboard. Hence, this finding is in line with studies on the use of public transport by Cozens *et al.*, (2004), Pulugurtha (2008) and Ryan *et al.*, (2009) that in many bus stops, the level of crime is significant. From the findings of this study it is clear that when the travel environment is effective, the incident of crime will to a certain extent reduce especially at bus stops. On the contrary, when bus stops are unclean or not properly designed they will attract or generate criminal activities. Therefore, there is need for further study on the management of bus stops towards mitigating criminal activities in commercial motorcycling transportation. Interestingly, examination of crime experienced by commuters in commercial motorcycling service is a vital conclusion of this study as the intensity, factors, and gravity of criminal activities in the motorcycle business are explained. Therefore, the state of crime at present in commercial motorcycling transportation calls for immediate resolutions to limit or reduce the challenge.

In a focus group discussion, participants observed that aside from inadequate public transport service, the motorcycle (*okada*) service operation is awkward. Respondents noted:

Unregistered operators are not really into the business. However, they are always operating to take advantage of situations and passengers especially during rush hours. During such periods, passengers are vulnerable to crimes by losing many of their belongings to these unregistered *okada* operators (Focus Group Discussion with Commuters in Apete, 7 March, 2017).

This was said to be common among motorcycles’ operators that operate mostly at night especially when commuters are stranded owing to their failure to get motorbikes. The findings of this study agrees with Wilson *et al.*, (1982) “Broken Windows Theory” stating “physical incivilities (trash, graffiti, abandoned buildings, disrepair, unkempt lots) and social incivilities (rowdy behaviour, drug dealing, public drunkenness, prostitution, panhandling and loitering) result in higher crime and fear of crime”. Poor management of commercial motorcycling transport service, unregulated locations or bus stops, weak monitoring of the behaviours of *okada* riders, inadequate security personnel to checkmate the activities of *okada* riders were perceived as factors that contribute to crime in commercial motorcycling transport service (Focus Group Discussion with commuters in Apete, 7 March, 2017). This is in agreement with the observations of criminal justice scholars who

stressed about the importance of environmental factors to facilitate and discourage crimes that are not in favour of property and people (Ryan *et al.*, 2009).

The issue of fear of commuter's safety in the commercial motorcycling operation from this study was perceived as being normal and unfortunate. This according to a respondent "is due to situation where demands for the service outrange the supply; facilities are grossly inadequate, etc" (Interview at Ojo, March 12, 2017). The extent and constant incidence of crime within Ibadan metropolis as demonstrated by the respondents requires an immediate response to reduce the state of insecurity so that commuters most especially can use public motorcycles without any form of fear. It can be deduced from the analysis, reviewed literature and theoretical arguments, that occurrence of crime in commercial motorcycling is as a result of insecurity in locations and poor bus stops management. Many of the respondents claimed that the pitiable travel environment enhanced crime in commercial motorcycling operation. This was buttressed in an interview with a commuter who stated as follows:

I use motorcycle because it conveys me faster to wherever I am going than if I use a car. The only thing is that I do not like the way some of the bike operators use it to commit crime. I was once a victim of such at a bus stop. It is unfortunate nowhere is safe in the country anymore even at bus stops (Interview at Moniya, March 12, 2017).

The deduction that could be made from the above responses and comments is that commuters are facing serious safety challenges while using motorcycle transport. The transport service needs to be properly managed and all necessary parts should function effectively so as to attract commuters. Sequel to the above emphasis, many of the respondents stated that the location, quality of bus stops and supply of motorcycle needs to be improved coupled with effective enforcement of rules and regulation that guide the operation of commercial motorcycle. All these measures will help in reducing the increased crime wave that hindered the constant use of the service and hampered commuters' livelihoods.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

This article examines the safety and security of intra-urban *okada* transport in Ibadan within the framework of informality. The paper argues that the *okada* phenomenon is one of the multifarious manifestations of informal economy in Nigeria in general and in Ibadan in particular. It submits that it not disputable that *okada* riding has over the years generated negative externalities; yet it has been a viable source of employment opportunities for thousands of people in Ibadan and other major cities in Nigeria. The paper notes that owners of private *okada* are the safest and most secure group of trip makers, whereas commercial motorcycle riders, passengers and pedestrians are the most vulnerable groups that are exposed to crimes and crashes respectively. The challenges of safety and security challenges of *okada* could be minimized if agencies

responsible for traffic control and management could initiate and activate pro-active safety and security measures.

Okada riding has become embedded into Ibadan's socio-economic fabric, which implies that policy option that will be used to manage it must be tailored towards win-win outcomes for both the establishment and the riders. Any policy option that does not prioritize a win-win outcome will distort the political order and economic stability. The point at issue is that *okada* riding could co-exist with the vehicular mode of transportation within the ambit of law. The minimum requirement is for the policy makers to design appropriate mass transportation policy for the city, through the design of multi-modal transportation system. This could as well be backed with effective regulation of *okada* riding within Ibadan city.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusion above, the following policy recommendations are suggested:

1. The governmental authorities in Ibadan should look for creative strategy on how to properly integrate *okada* riding into vehicular mode of transportation.
2. The Ibadan governing authorities, should enhance the quality of transportation within the city, about 99% of intra-city movement is executed through road based mode of transportation. The Oyo state government should step up investment on intra-city railway transportation; the Ibadan governing authorities should focus on long term project of reducing the volume of public transportation under motorcycle taxis.
3. Public safety requires regular and sustainable maintenance and up-grading of crowd control infrastructures, such as pedestrian sideways, barriers to prevent obstructive pedestrian crossing as well as speed breakers and vehicular barriers regulating and control intra-city road-based movement. In the light of this, governing authorities in Ibadan should not only invest in crowd control infrastructures they should also ensure *okada* riders pass through government-owned motorcycle riding training school and get licensed before they are permitted to operate *okada* in within the metropolis.

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