

IS “OKADA” COMMERCIAL MOTORCYCLE RIDING REDUCING POVERTY AMONG OPERATORS IN ILORIN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KWARA STATE?

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ABSTRACT

Poverty has been identified as a persistent economic problem in the economy of Nigeria for more than three decades. It has become painful issue to many Nigerians. Not less than two-third of the population of Nigeria is absolutely poor, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, (2010). “Okada” is a commercial motorcycle transport that operates within the communities and local vicinities in Nigeria. Some Nigerians are involved in the operation of this local transport as a last resort to survive. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the impact of “Okada” or local motorcycle transport in reducing poverty among the riders/operators in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara state, Nigeria. Sample size of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents was chosen using multistage sampling technique among the rider populace. However, questionnaires were employed as a major instrument of data collection and supplemented with personal interview with the respondents. The analysis was done through descriptive and inferential statistics inform of percentages and table frequencies as well as Spearman Rank Order Correlation (ρ), using the software of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 20.0). The findings reveal negative but not significant impact of the “Okada” motorcycle riding on poverty reduction as well as living standard of the respondents. The results show weak and negative correlation between the two variables, $r = -.091$, $n=120$, $p(.325) > .0005$, with high amount of money makes per day associated with lower standard of living. Finally, the paper draws conclusion and gives meaningful suggestion towards the standardization and enhancement of the “Okada” motorcycle riding in Ilorin West Local Government Area in particular and Kwara State, Nigeria in general.

Keywords: Commercial motorcycle, Ilorin West, Kwara State, “Okada”, Poverty reduction.

INTRODUCTION

“Okada” is a motorcycle or bike uses for commercial transport in Nigeria. This idea of using motorcycle/bike to carry passengers/commuters in Nigerian communities came up in the late last century during the time the country experienced economic downturn. This local motorbike commercial transport is also commonly used in some other West African Countries like Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Sierra Leone. As it is described and overviewed by Odidi (2012) that:

“Okadas appeared in the late 1980s during an economic downturn in Nigeria. Jobless youths began to use motorcycles to earn money by transporting passengers on narrow or poorly maintained roads to far away cities and villages. This type of

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transportation quickly became popular and acceptance of it has increased steadily. Okadas are now one of the primary modes of transportation in Nigeria and comprise a cheap and adaptable transportation system, the most popular informal one in the country by far. Even in remote villages they arrive at regular intervals. It has become a means of transportation regularly used by the young and the old, and men and women.”

In a normal situation, “Okada” bike carries one or two passengers at a time. While in an abnormal situation, it carries more than two passengers at a time, that is, three to four or even five passengers at a time. This occurs in a situation whereby the passengers that take it are going together to the same place, destination or route either they are friends, family members or not, albeit, it is risk, un-called for and equally against by the law in Kwara State in particular and Nigeria in general to carry overload by the riders/operators. The fare per passenger is depended on the distance weather is short/near or long/far. The minimum fare per passenger and drop is fifty Naira (N50:00) although it may be more based on the distance. The fare that is more than this minimum fare is negotiable or can be bargained. Carrying more than a passenger at one drop can reduced the fare for the passengers on average.

Today, hundreds of people are riding or involving in Okada commercial bike for means of survival or to sustain their livelihood. Due to severe poverty that people are struggling with couple with high rate of unemployment in the country, make many young ones particularly, poor, illiterates, semi-literate and unemployed to involve in the Okada riding business. More so, with low business sale experienced by young individuals from their previously engaged business activities and enterprises make many of them to swerve to the Okada commercial transport in the recent years. Majority of the respondents in this Okada riding had one business or another before deciding to involve in Okada business. In their own words in the interview with them, *“look Oga, we have our own businesses/works we are trained for and successfully did freedom with our boss but the businesses are not doing well with us. We don’t have business in hand as it was before and find it more difficult to feed our family and pay the school fees of our children”*. In line with this, the finding of the study carried out in Benin City, Nigeria by Iribhogbe and Odai (n.d.) shows that majority of the respondents (Okada riders) considered Okada commercial motorcycle business as a last resort for their livelihood. As many of them are poor and illiterate, though, in the recent years semi-literate ones are also seen it as an alternative for not getting employment. The primary reason for the respondents’ involvement in this Okada transport is to reduce their level of poverty and their immediate family members as well as solving their problem of hunger. However, the current study endeavours to investigate the impact of this Okada commercial motorcycle transport on the living standard and livelihood of the respondents.

CONCEPT OF POVERTY

The concept of poverty is not specific in the literature and studies of social and human sciences. This is different from one society or country to another as it depends on the situation of people living in a peculiar environment. For instance, a person or household is considered to be poor if his/her disposable income earns is below designated income threshold. According to the international body, like United Nations (UN), someone who is living below international poverty line is considered poor. In Nigeria, 70.2% and 90.8% population are living below one and two US dollars (US\$1 & US\$2), respectively (Trends, 2000), although this depends on the national economy of any given country. Nigeria should have had specific and designated income poverty line through her minimum wage of N18,000

that came up with by the federal government but it is unfortunate that is not overwhelmingly materialized nationwide.

Nigeria is one of the countries where poverty is beyond lack of adequate income, but a combination of many forms of deprivation that together allow human capabilities to go unrealized (Akindola, 2009). Similarly, poverty is defined as “a social condition, characterized by inadequate access to basic human needs (food and non-food) to the subsistence of socially acceptable minimum standard of living in a given society. Some of these basic human needs include adequate food, shelter, portable water, health care, education and employment opportunities” (Akintola & Yusuf, 2001).

It is further argued that poverty is a situation whereby individual youth are living with low income, unemployed i.e. lack gainful employment and access to few or no socio-economic amenities such as power supply, safe drinking water, good road and communication networks due to his/her residence in either rural area or marginalized sub-urban area (Abdussalam, 2014b). See also for more concept and definition of poverty in Abdussalam, et al., 2013a; 2014a. At this juncture, the concept of poverty is being defined via the inadequate income or resources to satisfy minimum basic needs by individual households. This is an economic terms in which is defined as an outcome, representing inability of a person to share or enjoy in the everyday lifestyles of the majority, in other words, to maintain a minimum living standard at a particular time and place due to an absence of meaningful resources (Sousa, 2000:14).

RESEARCH QUESTION

Is there any significant relationship between the amount of money make per day by the respondents and the contribution to their standard of living?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The research hypothesis related to the above research question in this study is:

Ho: there is no significant relationship between the amount of money make per day by the respondents and the contribution to their standard of living.

Ha: there is a significant relationship between the amount of money make per day by the respondents and the contribution to their standard of living.

STUDY AREA AND RESEARCH METHOD

The area of study covers Ilorin West Local Government Area (LGA) in Kwara state, Nigeria. Ilorin metropolis is an old town in Kwara State and it has been State capital for long. Ilorin metropolis comprises of three main Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the State, viz-a-viz, Ilorin East, Ilorin South and Ilorin West LGAs. Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State is in the transitional zone between Northern and southern parts of Nigeria. The LGA was created from defunct Ilorin Local Government Area in October, 1991 during the military regime. Today it is regarded as the premier local council in the state not merely because of its historical antecedent but because of the fact that it hosts the headquarters of the Emirate Council (comprises three LGAs aforementioned). The LGA plays a dual role of the host of the state capital as well as the headquarters of the Local Government Area. The population of Ilorin Local Government Area was 364, 666 according to the last population census in 2006 and this made it to be the most densely populated Local Government area in

Kwara state, Nigeria (National Population Commission, NPC, 2006; www.kwarastate.gov.ng-ilorinwest).

For this current study, primary data were used for the analysis and discussion. This is done through the questionnaire and interview with the respondents, who are the “okada” motorbike riders/operators within Ilorin West LGAs, Kwara State, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were distributed to the respondents who are chosen using Multistage Sampling Technique (MST). This is a method of sample selection which involves a complex form of cluster sampling whereby two or more levels of units are embedded one in the other. More so, the first stage of this technique comprises of constructing the clusters that will be employed to sample from while in the second stage, a sample of main respondents is then randomly chosen from each cluster. Conclusively, this technique is necessarily the process of taking random subsamples of preceding random samples and this is associated with low-cost as compared with common cluster sampling ([http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sampling...\(statistics\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sampling...(statistics))).

The researcher randomly chooses six “okada” parks and distributed randomly twenty (20) questionnaires each to the parks in Ilorin West LGAs. More so, in order to garner more information, the researcher interviewed six (6) respondents and each of them was selected randomly from the six (6) parks chosen. Therefore, the data collected from the respondents were analysed via percentages and table frequencies for the demographic characteristics of the respondents while the Spearman Rank Order Correlation (ρ) was used to respond to the research question and the related hypothesis posed earlier in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic information of the respondents (okada riders) is presented in the table below. This is based on the investigation conducted through the questionnaire and interview in the study area.

TABLE 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Gender:		
Male	120	100.0
female	0	0.0
Age:		
18-30yrs	36	30.0
31-40yrs	60	50.0
41-50yrs	24	20.0
Marital Status:		
Single	24	20.0
Married	91	75.8
Others	5	4.2
Size of HH/Family:		
Below 4	48	40.0
4-7	48	40.0
8-11	20	16.7
Above 11	4	3.3
Education:		
No Schooling	34	28.3
Primary	35	29.2

Secondary	34	28.3
NCE/OND	12	10.0
B.sc./HND	3	2.5
Others	2	1.7
Ownership/Sponsorship:		
Government	0	0.0
Bank	10	8.3
Individual (dealer, contractor)	72	60.0
Self	38	31.7
Mode of Payment:		
Full	39	32.5
Instalment/Hire-Purchase	81	67.5
Period Involved:		
1-3yrs	27	22.5
4-6yrs	56	46.7
7-9yrs	32	26.7
10-12yrs	4	3.3
12yrs above	1	0.8
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2014 by the Author

Table 1 shows that males 120 (100.0%) are predominantly gender-bias that characterized respondents (okada riders) in the study. It means that the business of okada is majorly involved males, as they generally champion in the business of commercial transportation than do by their female counterparts (Abdussalam, 2014b). Based on the age range, average of the respondents 60 (50.0%) in the study falls in the age range of 31-40 years, this is followed by age range 18-30 years and 41-50 years with 36 (30.0%) and 24 (20.0%) respondents, respectively. It connotes that majority of Okada riders are within the age range of 31-40 years. Likewise, majority of the respondents are married 91(75.8%) while the remaining minority of the respondents are single 29 (24.2%). In Ilorin West LGA in particular and Kwara State, Nigeria in general, the married people do take up the Okada business as alternative for their inability to secure job opportunity as well as to fulfil their economic and marital responsibilities of the household. The size of household or family of the respondents reveals that majority 96 (80.0%) have small household size of less than seven (7) members and the remaining respondents 24 (20.0%) have large family size.

Based on the education level, most of the respondents are either not go to school or possess low certificate in education with 103 (85.8%) and the remaining respondents 17 (14.2%) are high certificate holders. This implies that majority of those riding Okada commercial motorcycle are less educated or illiterate in Ilorin West LGA in particular and Kwara State, Nigeria in general. The major sponsorship of Okada is an individual (either dealer or contractor) 72 (60.0%), followed by self and bank with 38 (31.7%) and 10 (8.3%), respectively. This means that government in Kwara State, Nigeria is not showing any interest in sponsoring or promoting Okada commercial transport in the State. Though, this is not a shock as some State governments in Nigeria are kicking against the operation of Okada as a means of transportation in their respective states. Some states have on and off in banning the Okada operation and normally generate protest from the riders (Odili, 2012). It equally reveals that majority of the respondents 81 (67.5%) paid for their Okada motorcycle by instalment while the remaining respondents 39 (32.5%) paid in full to acquire or own the motorcycles. Generally, the respondents 83 (69.2%) have been riding Okada for less than

seven (7) years while the remaining respondents 37 (30.8%) have been involved in the Okada business for more than seven (7) years.

TABLE 2: Distribution based on Respondents' Amount makes Per Day, Standard of Living, Assessment and Problem Encountered in Okada Riding

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Amount Makes Per Day:		
N1,000-N1,500	20	16.7
N1,500-N2,000	56	46.7
N2,000-N2,500	26	21.7
N2,500-N3,000	17	14.2
N3,000 above	1	0.8
Standard of Living:		
Substantial Improvement	18	15.0
Moderate Improvement	77	64.2
No Improvement	25	20.8
Assessment:		
Satisfactory	38	31.7
Not Satisfactory	71	59.2
Don't Know	11	9.2
Problem Encountered:		
Lacking Access to Loan	49	40.8
Mode of Payment	21	17.5
Others	50	41.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey 2014 by the Author

Table 2 displays that respondents 76 (63.4%) are making the amount of money per day of between the range of N1,000-N2,000 while the remaining respondents 44 (36.7%) are earning the amount of money per day of N2,000 above. Albeit, this amount of money making per day by the respondents is a gross amount, after necessary deduction and other expenses per day, it would reduce much. According to the interviewees, *"people always think that we are making so much money in Okada business but after we pay the deliver, buy food for breakfast and lunch during the business hours and buy fuel/petrol, you would realize that the amount of money makes per day has drastically reduced"*. Aside this, one of the respondents whispers to my ears that some of them are incurred unnecessary expenses on themselves through taking hard drug or dried gin, local hot drink, such as *"ogogoro"*, *"pelebe"*, palm wine and smoking, couple with large size of family members. This simply means that net amount of money making per day by the Okada riders is not that relatively higher and also not sufficient for them to yield reasonable effect on majority of the respondents' standard of living.

Table 2 similarly shows that majority of the respondents 95 (79.2%) experienced improvement in their living standard while the remaining respondents 25 (20.8%) hardly experienced improvement in their living standard. This implies that most respondents believed that their poverty has reduced and better off when involved in Okada business. In contrary to this, majority of the respondents 82 (68.4%) are not satisfied with Okada business while the remaining respondents 38 (31.7%) are only satisfied with riding Okada commercial motorbike. However, the respondents 50 (41.7%) and 49 (40.8%) believed that the problem encountered in Okada business are associated with others and lacking access to loan,

respectively. While the respondents 21 (17.5%) are facing problem of mode of payment for possession of Okada. The problem associated with others include problem of accident, disturbance by police on the road, problem that has to do with health, like cold, catarrh, coughing, eye problem to encounter when riding Okada commercial motorcycle. Although, sometimes, some of these other problems are caused because of their negligence and lack of heed to the instruction. Figure 1 shows different Okada commercial motorbikes with passengers, some of them are taken overload (see appendix).

TABLE 3: Spearman Rank Order Correlation (rho) Analysis of the Amount of Money makes Per Day and Standard of Living of the Respondents Correlations

		resp. amt makes per day	resp. standard of living
Spearman's rho	Correlation	1.000	-.091
	resp. amt makes per day		
	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.325
	N	120	120
	Correlation	-.091	1.000
resp. standard of living	Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.325	.
	N	120	120

Table 3 shows the result of the Spearman Rank Order Correlation (rho) conducted in the study, after all the necessary assumptions have been taken care of. The direction of the relationship between the amount of money makes per day and the standard of living (the two variables) shows negative correlation but not significant (spearman rho $-.091$), that is, the more amount of money makes per day associated with less standard of living of the respondents. More so, there is a small correlation between the two variables (below $.10$), this suggests quite a weak relationship between amount of money makes per day and standard of living. The amount of money makes per day hardly helps to explain the variance (00.83%) in respondents' scores on the standard of living. To determine the strength of the relationship, see Pallant (2012:134) for detail.

The Spearman Rank Order Correlation (rho) was conducted to show the contribution of Okada commercial motorcycle on the respondents' poverty reduction or living standard. In this respect, the relationship between the amounts of money makes per day and standard of living was investigated using spearman rank order correlation (rho). The results show weak and negative correlation between the two variables, $r = -.091$, $n = 120$, $p (.325) > .0005$, with high amount of money makes per day associated with lower standard of living. Therefore, the above results and analysis provide answer to our research question and hypothesis posed in earlier in this study. There is no any significant relationship between the amount of money make per day by the respondents and the contribution to their standard of living and thereby we do not reject our null hypothesis (H_0), which states that "there is no significant relationship between the amount of money make per day by the respondents and the contribution to their standard of living".

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study was based on the using the Okada commercial motorcycle as a means of local transportation and how it helps the riders or respondents to reduce their poverty problem and equally enhance their standard of living in Ilorin West LGA in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study has shown that Okada business is predominantly male business and most respondents are less educated and poor. Although the findings show weak and negative but not significant correlation between the contribution of Okada riding business and standard of living or poverty reduction of the respondents, majority of the respondents still believed that their standard of living improved with Okada business. It is still believed that Okada business can make the riders to enjoy economic well-being and make them economically responsible both in the family and the society. The following suggestion could assist them out:

Government should mandatory training inform of safety classes and issue license to the trainees after they complete the training. This can be driving school for those who wish to be riding Okada as commercial transport. Similarly, the training should also incorporate health education and relevant law that guide the road safety for the protection of riders and their passengers, and to avoid accident on the road. By doing this, it would help the Okada riders to make more money per day as road is safe and lives of passengers are guaranteed. The more the passengers take Okada as a means of transport the more money the riders can make per day and eventually overcome their economic problem. Government should equally see it as a way to create more job opportunity for the youth, less privileged and poor in the society.

On the part of individual Okada riders, they should endeavour to drive with care so that the rate of accident associated with Okada riding is drastically reduced. They should also try to use personal protective equipment for their safety. Majorly, they should avert from taking hard drug and smoking while driving. This would help to reduce their daily expenses on undesirable consumption and relatively increase their net amount of money making per day.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This present study would contribute to the wealth of knowledge in the area of poverty problem, poverty reduction as well as local commercial transportation in the developing economies particularly, in Kwara State, Nigeria. Likewise, it can serve as a means of reference in the academic fields or disciplines such as economics development and transport services for the in-coming researchers. In terms of policy implementation, it would assist the policy makers and politicians to employ it as a guide in the policy implementation on poverty reduction programme or scheme in the State and country in general.

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FIGURE 1: Okadas (Commercial Motorcycles) in Nigerian Society



