

The political economy of ‘Okada’ transport business as an employment strategy in Nigeria

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Abstract

Much academic energy has been so dissipated by transport geographers on the traffic relevance of motorcycle (Okada), especially as a commercial means of providing mobility. Observably, the mutually related essence of transport and employment that led to the popularity of motorcycle in most cities in Nigeria is fast extending to multidimensional problems of economy, politics and social malaise. The objective of this study therefore is to find out these other underlying political, economic and social factors overshadowing the mobility relevance of motorcycle as a transport business and why it is fast becoming an employment strategy for millions of unemployed youths in Nigeria. The questions are: has it alleviated poverty in the country or has it provided for means of development of human capital for the needed industrialization in Nigeria? The study area is Ekiti state of Nigeria where surveys of probabilistic sampling method with random techniques are used to pick 500 Okada riders as respondents. The critical investigation in this study is to find out why the respondents are engaged in ‘Okada’ transport business and why they abandoned their various trades as artisans and their education. It is to examine Okada’s business’ prospect of buoyant economy and the observable Okada riders’ daily income and association with political elite. The study is to also find out why ‘Okada Unions’ are becoming second arms of political parties, forming strong pressure influences and ‘stated groups’, which are always motivated by politicians to attain political gains. The study will be raising policy options for the government that will not only secure a socio-political and economic future for the country as a developing nation, but will also be predicting the outcome of mono-lateral Okada economy across Nigeria cities.

Keywords: Political Economy; Developing Economy; Transportation; Politics; Motorcyclist unions.

1. Introduction

One of the consistent socio-economic and political issues associated with state creations in Nigeria is that, a large chunk of all-round development in the affected states are concentrated on the state capital. Ado-Ekiti as the state capital of Ekiti State in Nigeria is not an exception to this case. Arising from this peculiarity, affected state capitals do experience population growth, land – use became dispersed, trip-length increased and the resultant multinuclear morphology of the 'new' city required greater and specialized functions. In the past, Ado-Ekiti; like most growing urban centres in developing world, was faced with serious problems of mobility and at a stage, motorcycle (Okada)¹ which is a two-wheeled machine designed to carry two persons was brought in as a response to the inadequate transport facilities to meet the needs of ever increasing commuters. Simultaneously, transport problems were eased and the increasing unemployment rates went for a downward slope. Both users and operators were constrained by these reasons to use the motorcycle.

The recent burgeoning growth in commercial motorcycle or 'Okada' in Nigeria generally could be attributed to its inherent advantages of door to door service, manoeuvrability during traffic congestion, ability to travel on poor roads and ease of responsiveness to demand. In these wise, so much academic energy has been so dissipated by transport geographers on the traffic relevance of the motorcycle, especially as a commercial means of providing mobility (Daniels and Warner, 1983, Ogunsanya and Galtima, 1993; NITT, 2007). What has not been adequately documented however is the motorcycle's business contribution to the socio-economic and political depression² noticeable in many metropolises in Nigeria.

While it is no gainsaying that the immediate problems of transportation, employment, social satisfaction and investment are taken care of by the so much diversion to the business of 'Okada', the immediate and future socio-political and economic implications of this new fast growing 'mono-economy' venture in Nigeria has not really received the necessary attention of the policy makers. It is this obvious lacuna that this study set itself to cover.

¹ *Okada* is a local name coined after the usage of motorcycle as a means of transport business, in some areas it is called *Achaba* raising its popularity among the city dwellers.

² Many a times, the Okada unions may support different political groups that usually lead to conflicts and clashes. Also, while it employs a lot of young people, and solves economic problems, there have been a lot of road accidents as a result of careless driving.

The argument here is that, there are mutually related essence of transport and employment and this is leading to the relevance and popularity of motorcycle business in most cities in Nigeria. On the other hand, this is also fast extending to multidimensional problems in economy, politics and social issues. The reasons are with us. Nigeria's emerging democracy is faced with challenges of meeting the welfare aspirations of the citizenry; but economic downturn and leadership insensitivity seems to be a clog in the wheel of provision of valued dividends of democracy to the electorates. Over the years, attempts at revamping the economy through liberalized economic policy reforms have become contradictory and paradoxical in the sense that they rather increased the poverty and hardship level of the citizenry and has increased the gradual elimination of the middle class, yet the people must survive in the face of deepening material poverty and an idle government that cannot empower the people politically, economically and socially. On this note, commercial motorcyclist union members readily became a tool in the hands of dubious politicians to win election; the machine itself became a cheap labour for 'fast or quick cash', replacing hard labours of the technical artisans; it became also, a tool for stealing, snatching, robbery and even kidnapping. In Ado-Ekiti, as elsewhere, the debate is whether to ban it or not. No regime has been able to address the issue decisively because, motorcyclist unions like their counterparts in motor road transports has become a 'force' to be reckon with as members are mostly partners of the same process of enthronement of some governments in the present democracy.

The objective in this study therefore is to find out these other underlying political, economic and social factors overshadowing the mobility relevance of motorcycle as a transport business in Ado-Ekiti metropolis. It is also aimed at articulating the future lessons for a developing economy as Nigeria and evolves a policy option.

To achieve these, the study is organized into six parts. After this introduction, the paper defines the study area and examines the methodology. Section three provides a fitting perspective on Nigeria political economy. Section four examines and analyses motorcycle transportation as a form of business. Section five discusses the results of the analysed data and draw lessons for a struggling economy while section six considers the policy options and draws conclusion.

The study area is Ado-Ekiti metropolis. It became the headquarters of Ekiti State on its creation on 1st October 1996 as one of the new six states created in Nigeria by the then Provisional Ruling Council headed by the late head of state, General Sani Abacha. Over the years, Ado-Ekiti had grown in size and in

population. Some fifty years ago, the city began to expand beyond its peripheries and ancient gates and ramparts. In 1963, the city was the largest urban centre in present Ondo and Ekiti states in Nigeria and its population of 158,000 at the census of that year represented it as the most populous urban centre in Eastern Yoruba land. The (2006) population census estimates for Ado-Ekiti is about 308,621 out of about 2.2 million estimated for all the sixteen Local Governments in the State. This is considered to be grossly under estimated as the population of the city in 2004 was put at 444,749. The creation of Ekiti State in October, 1996 and the establishment of State capital at Ado-Ekiti have obviously enhanced the city's physical development. The development of the city's land use starts from the densely-populated centre of Ijigbo and Odo-Ado area and spread to the hinterland. The early settlements followed this pattern, following a number of small centres of Okela, Ajilosun, Irona, and Okesa. At the creation of the state, Ado-Ekiti became so 'Blown up' as heavy population from all over the state and in Nigeria struggle to make mark and benefit from the expected socio-economic development associated with such new areas of state headquarters in Nigeria. Aside from the massive private investments, especially on buildings and markets, Ado-Ekiti became the headquarters of both the Local Government Council and the State Government. This attracted massive infrastructural development. In the light of these, the few settlements expanded. Areas like, Adebayo, Bawa, Opopogboro, Ilokun, the University community, textile, Omisanjana, Ajebandele, Erufun, Polytechnic community, NTA, Ile-Abiye, Mofere, Ekute, Secretariat and Bank road, Federal Housing Estate, Better life, Basiri, Olorunsogo, Olorunda and several others sprang up. The present urban sprawl of the metropolis can not only be explained by the centre-spread development pattern as the city's development has spread out in all directions avoiding only the hilly areas.³ The central business functions still concentrate on the Ijigbo, Okesa centres, but there are many other places that have also assumed these functions. In the recent times, the metropolitan pattern of settlement has changed from linear to more dispersed structure, with clusters of residential, industrial, commercial and institutional land uses in different locations.

The unprecedented growth of the city and its Surrounding communities has serious implications on transportation system in the city. The implication is evident in the ever-increasing demand for transport services by the city's residents to satisfy their socio-economic needs. Despite this, one obvious

³ The hilly topography of the city areas has made construction and expansion of feeder roads very difficult hence motorcycle has become the means to move people and goods to their doorsteps.

question begging for answer is why the city has few taxi- cabs compared with other state headquarters. One cannot also explain why the small buses called “Akoto” popular and common in Ikere-Ekiti. (Arguably the second biggest city in the state), a town of about 10-minute drive, has not spread to Ado-Ekiti metropolis. But one major response and indeed massive response to this gap, is the operation and use of Motorcycles as means of public transport in the city of Ado-Ekiti.

Despite its dominance in public mobility, however, very little is documented about the impact of the mode on the urban environment and various types of Socio, political and economic externalities generated by the use and operation of the commercial Motorcycle. Consequently, with the growing demand for commercial Motorcycles as a means of urban transportation in Ado-Ekiti; this study identified and analysed the various associated externalities, and come to a policy option by which the excesses could be mitigated.

2. Conceptual framework

Both as a theory and approach, Political Economy seems the natural framework for the analysis embarked upon here. Subsuming underdevelopment, dependency and centre periphery theories under “a larger whole” (Ake, 1991; Ryndina *et al*, 1980; Offiong, 2001; Baran,1952; Norgaard, 1984; Duffield, 1994; Omolayo, 2002:2) the political economy framework is mostly interested in the nature of capitalism as global phenomenon, the nature of the relations between the centre and periphery, and specifications of periphery capitalism. The framework is expected to facilitate the in depth probing of the central issues of the subject-matter and the X-raying of the socio-economic and political impacts of the use of motorcycle as a commercial transport business.

The political economy framework has been inspired by the writings of classical political economist like Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo, David Hume, John Stuart Mills (Samuelson and Nordhaus, 2002; Anifowose and Enemu, 1999:39). The classical theorists made a bold statement to free the people from all encumbrances with state economic participation and prefer a political economy of *laizzez faire* free enterprise. The Marxian framework is against the classical school, they had emphasised effective state economic intervention placing all social classes, production forces and the social relation of production on economy and that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles (Marx, 1986; Sabine and Thorson, 1973; Seer, 1995; Roberts and Amy eds., 2000; Jensen ed., 1966; Okereke, 2004).

The orthodox Marxists, fostered by Latin American neo-Marxian analytical perspectives of underdevelopment, dependency and centre-periphery, had been championed and are sustained by the thoughts and writings of the Third world at large (Ake, 1991; Offiong, 2001; Freund, 1992; Randel, 1996; Onimode, 1988; Omolayo, 2002). Even though the neo-classical theorists of John Keynes have remain in a midstream between Marxian and classical orientations arguing for limited measure of state intervention in the economic process, the neo-Marxian position has been used “to undertake various studies ranging from the process of colonization and decolonization, underdevelopment and dependency, political instability, the activities of Multi-National Corporations (MNCs), the World Bank and the International Monetary Funds (IMF), the ‘debt trap’ of Third World Countries (TWCs), etc (Anifowose and Enemu. 1999:53; Santos, 1970; Ghosh, 2001; Baran, 1952; Baran and Sweezy, 1966; Anderson and Woodrow, 1989; Fagen, 1983).

Relevant propositions of the theory and approach to this particular study however include: Classical economic liberalization; Marxian economic determinism which subordinates the political superstructure to the economic substructure and the have – not to the haves: and Third World scholar suggestion of neo-colonial peonage (Onimode, 2001:11). In relation to this proposition and to this study, political economy is now seen in relation to changes in the nature of the socio-economic structure within which it is operating and the practical material and intellectual problems that were thrown up within it (Ajayi, 2002:81). Political economy on this note, is seen as an analytical model for the study and as the sum total of the relations of production and the economic structure of society. Banwo (1999:7) went further to consider the works of Engel and Popov, among others, to explain political economy from scientific stand points, having realized the framework of analysis, its nature and the methodology of political economy, he conceptualizes it as a science which deals with economic laws governing production, exchange and distribution of wealth at various stages of the evolution of human society. Relying on the strength of political economy as interplay of politics and economy, Banwo (1999:8) equally opined that it looks at the nature of political power in a given human society, the class content and character of the state and the influence of the state on economy. The social element of this study also has a base on political economy as a theory. On this, it is seen as studying the social relationship between people in the process of production. The above assertion exposed the undeniable relationship between the economy of a given stratus and the socio-economic status or classes that abides

within the people of the state. Still on this note, Marxist – Leninist⁴ political economy also studies the social side of production rather than its technical side (Which is the subject of the natural and technical sciences). It does not examine material production as much, but the social relation of the people concerning production, the social system of production, exchange and consumption, that is, relations in all the phases of the reproduction of material values for example, in the context of our study. The question is what are the social relations and the economic gauge between the ‘Okada’ business men, the state and the society in a mode of production?

The above clarifications theoretically throw up the nature of various connections of the socio– political and economic externalities associated with motor-cycle as a form of commercial business in Nigeria. It also exposes the unending contradictions between labour and capital in a ‘rat-race’ for survival in our study area. The framework further queried whether the Government can comfortably rely on the dictates of ‘market economy’ in the face of reality of the impending down turn of an unregulated market forces, especially in the matters of ‘Okada’ business.

3. Perspectives on Nigeria political Economy

Ado-Ekiti as the capital city of Ekiti State unavoidably inherited the same socio, political and economic structure of its ‘mother’, Nigeria. This was an underdeveloped, dependant and peripheral State in the context of a global capitalist economy. This status situates Nigeria squarely in the group of countries variously called the South, The Third World, less-developed countries (LDCs) and, lately, developing countries (DCs). With these countries, Nigeria shares a number of characteristics. These characteristics are a product of geographical location in the world, political history, politics and leadership, the economy, the developed/developing dichotomy, etc.

Nigeria is thus not only a southern hemisphere nation; it is also ex-colonial, neo-colonial, politically yet to be stable, corrupt, and industrially weak with little or no autochthonous capital base and reliant on foreign expertise and technology. Moreover, Nigeria operates the type of economy which Coran Hyden, (cited in Ajayi, 2002:123) has described as the “economy of affection”. This is used to refer to an economy in which institutions and rules serve the subjective interest of those in charge and not the objective interest of society (Ajayi, 2002:170).

⁴ Lenin, 1939 *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism*. New York: International Publishing Company.

And the populace is the worse for it – poor, illiterate, insecure, diseased and of the lowest living standards possible. What is worse, Nigeria is a debtor-nation, perhaps in the category of those referred to as highly indebted poor countries of the world (HIPC's) (Ajayi & Iyoha, cited in Omolayo, 2002:4).

Again, over the years, the population went on the high side, yet the economy is at the parlous state. This has ill-affected the macro-economic sector in terms of low Gross Domestic product (GDP), falling Per capita Income (PCI), mass unemployment, rising inflationary trend, falling industrial sector and production capacity performance, failure of critical infrastructure, low investment, constant down-stream energy crisis and unbaiting industrial dispute. The poor macro-economy sector performance has, therefore, negatively impacted on economic stability, growth and development. Besides, the economy has to contend with endemic corruption. The parlous state of the nation's economy has invariably engendered poor human development index.

Nigeria thus contains many poverty-stricken societies with the citizens battling for daily survival. 'okada' commercial transport activities became one of the means of employment. While 'Okada' provided a means for employment, it also came with its attendant and observable socio-economic and political problem which is the subject of this study. The Nigeria situation is heavily related to Ado Ekiti Economy too. The city is only important in terms of the urban development and industrial progress earlier discussed. The other significant proofs of development in the Ado-Ekiti city are in the educational and the media field. Aside from the increasing political awareness and the history of boisterous politics noted generally with the South West of Nigeria, the economy of the City is hugely dependent on the food products that it trades in. The market place is especially well known for its hand-woven products. Apart from these, footwear, pottery, brick and textile products are important outputs from the city. It is however important to note here, that apart from the increasing political activities, Physical Development and social transformation, the cultural degeneration associated with urban growth is also present. Cocoa exportation and textile industries, which used to be the main stay of Ado-Ekiti economy, have equally gone to oblivion. The immediate observation is that, more of the young people, who are in the productive age are fast neglecting school and technician workshops for the 'fast selling' Okada transport business as a means of lively hood. The genesis of this sudden change in socio-economic development is what the next part of the study attempts to unravel.

4. Motorcycle Transportation Business: A perspective

Attempts to solve the urban transport problems in Nigeria have taken so many dimensions. The public has however responded massively to the problem by providing automobiles for public transport. This is in addition to the fluctuating fortunes of government owned transportation arrangements. One of the dynamic systems offered by the private individuals is the use of the motorcycle as a mode of public transport.

In Nigeria, this system is not completely new. It started as a means of public transport in the riverine areas of Delta, Edo, Cross-river, Rivers and Akwa-Ibom states of Nigeria in the early eighties mainly due to the water-logged nature of these areas (Ogunsanya and Galtma, 1993:191.) it is also common in the dispersed settlement of the Eastern states of Nigeria where it is a proper mode for inter-rural and rural-urban transport use by both sex of male and female.

In late eighties, again, the use of this mode as an intra-urban means of passengers' movement became prevalent, not only on the basis of increasing need for transportation of growing population, but for a reason of economic situation consequent upon the structural adjustment policy of the government with its very stringent attributes. It actually became a necessity in the nineties, when with the failing road infrastructures; the need to meet the growing demand for public transport resulted in the adaptation of non-conventional means of public transport in major cities of Nigeria.

In Ado-Ekiti metropolis, the motorcycle as a mode of public transport was first introduced at around 90s. As observed by the chairman of the Okada Riders Association of Ekiti State located in Ado- Ekiti,⁵ the introduction was in response to the scanty taxi cabs and the high cost of transportation by the few taxi cabs at this time and the need to cater for those people who could not afford the taxi fare. This was more so as only few major highways are being plied by the taxi cabs. At its inception, there were also few motorcycles involved in the business. This business became unique as it offered the services of going into the streets and can drop its passengers even in front of their houses.⁶

With time, the population of the city grew as indicated earlier in the study. The additional function of the city and the development of various specialized traffic generating and traffic attracting land-use, and consequent increased separation of

⁵ Field work, 2014, 2015

⁶ Field work, 2015

origins of intra-urban trips from destination coupled with the increased volume of traffic resulting from the new function of the city imply greater demand for movement. The demand became so heavy and so it necessitated an increase use and the entrenchment of the motorcycle as a mode of commercial passenger transport.

At its inception, the operation was a free for all affairs and comprised of part-time and full-time operators. As the numbers of operators grew, the problems of operating the system grew. Government brought in a form of control and regulations which do not only bothers on traffic regulations but also was centred on revenue generation. The level of awareness became so high, more so as some noticeable social problems like increasing rate of accidents and consistent extortion and harassment from police came up.⁷ From this, the 'Okada' riders became more organized by forming unions on unit basis, if only to counter some of their encounters and take care of the welfare of operators.

In this study, three regimes in Ekiti are found to have played Significant roles that elicit our investigations on the socio-political and economic impacts of this form of commercial business. The civilian regimes of Governors – Ayo Fayose, Adebayo Oni and, Governor, Kayode Fayemi are the very key to our discussion. 'Okada' riders group came into political limelight during the first regime of Governor Fayose. His Campaign team before election elevated the 'growing' members of 'Okada' riders' association to a relevant political pressure group.⁸ For a group that is saturated with a large army of educated and illiterate poor young people, seeking relevance in the scheme of things in the state, it became an avenue for political and social expression and to be part of the stakeholders that are recognized in the installation of the Governor in the election. Fayose capitalized on these and used it to his advantage. Free uniform, cash, helmets and motorcycles were donated to the group. Candidate Fayose became popular, and in 2004 he won his first gubernatorial election in Ekiti to the amazement of the elites who had routed for the incumbent governor. In the enthroned government, 'okada' rider association became important, and they fully enjoyed government largesse all through the three and half years of Fayose's rule.⁹ This became a big discovery for all politicians of sort. More young people readily abandon

⁷ These are common place that necessitated the organization of unions in the first instance to cater for the welfare of members.

⁸ All of the three Governors eventually have their Okada groups in the state capital.

⁹ The governor was impeached (though this was later found to be illegal) and could not complete the four years term of office as expected by law.

their trades and join the bandwagon of motorcycle rider's business. From the politician, motorcycles came in large numbers, more as an inducement for political patronage than the label of 'youth empowerment' programmes chanted by them. The politics of the state later became boisterous and rancorous as a result of the emerging personality of the Governor, much of which is outside this study. He was impeached in 2006. At the settlement of the much political dust that followed the impeachment, a new Governor (Segun Oni) came into the office in 2007.

At the inception of the new Governor Segun Oni, the 'Okada' game came up strongly, this time with more fervency; various groups had emanated to outclass each other for the 'political' space. The cyclist; 'Okada' cooperative; Accomoran; National Union of Road Transport Workers (N.U.R.T.W) Okada groups and Road Transport Employer Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) Okada groups all came up. It soon led to one form of clashes and the other, especially as 'who becomes the state chairman' became a factor. The Government had no option than to proscribe all the groups and then formed a group under one Umbrella called "Okada Riders Association" of Ekiti state. The decision relegated their activities to a manageable level, but it again resulted into the group seeking a political refuge. They gladly found one in the main opposition party and its candidate who contested with the incumbent Governor. Unarguably, they became a major partner in the gang up of opposition who offered the much negative propaganda that swerved public opinion against the Governor for the most part of its rule in Ekiti State.¹⁰ The situation got to a climax on the 15 October 2011, when the Appeal Court sitting in Ilorin, Kwara State of Nigeria finally nullified the re-run election after years of legal battle. The court went ahead to declare the candidate of the opposition party as the duly elected governor of the state. The leadership of the Okada central group claimed that the band of the people that led the massive celebration heralding the coming of the new Governor was the 'Okada' riders' association.¹¹

The new Governor, (Dr Fayemi) having learnt from the past, took a quick recognition of the group and his government made soft loans available for procurement of motorcycles. The group repaid this recognition as they quickly formed a group called 'Fayemi Okada vanguard', and to crown it, the general chairman of Okada Riders association emerged from the 'Governor's group'.

¹⁰ This came up strongly at the focused group interview conducted with the members of Okada riders association conducted in 2015.

¹¹ Field work, 2014.

Fayemi lost his bid for a second term in office as allowed by law as he was defeated in 2014 state gubernatorial election by the former Governor who re-contested, riding high on the supports of the motorcyclist association.

Till date, membership of Okada riders' association is rising on daily basis, especially in Ado Ekiti metropolis. It has grown to 3 large branches of Olota, Ayoba and Mojere. On records, each branch is not having less than 2,000 members plying the roads on daily basis. As a result of faulty record keeping in the state (the records are not kept by the state government but are closely done by the association), Ado Ekiti with over 5,000 registered commercial motorcycles in 2012 has now grown to about 10,000 aside the ones that are coming from the suburbs which are not properly registered with the union branches. From all observations, they have not only remained so active in economic issues of the state, they were part of strong stakeholders that determined the outcome of the July 14th 2018 gubernatorial election in the state as usual.

The formations of union and branches have allowed a formal relationship between the union and the government. As part of the objectives discovered in this study, the Union act as 'go between' within the Union and the police and other multiple 'Uniform men'. The Union also acts as connecting points of pressure group influencing government policy issues. It is obvious too, that the arrangement has made possible an easy accessibility of the group to any government political function as a rent group, all of which are seen on the streets from time to time. At the governorship elections in Ekiti state (June, 2014 and July 2018 gubernatorial elections), and with a re-entrance of former governor Fayose to the race, the state went into another height of distributive politics and the possibility of banning okada became a campaign point.

Essentially, the task of this study is to expose the other socio-economic and political impact of the use of motorcycles as public transports, away from its traditional mobility advantages. The common and documented mobility advantage of motorcycle transport business has found theoretical explanation of its evolution. Trafee, Morrill and Gould model have shown that population and economic factors are crucial in explaining the evolution of transport in Nigeria and Ghana. Janelle model, on its own, had explained that the basic factor is the increased demand for accessibility, occasioned by the introduction of transport systems and its spatial effect. Janelle's model went further to show that this demand is a cyclic one, responding to new technology development and spatial reorganization of phenomena (Ogunsanya and Galtima, 1993:195).

This study on motorcycle business has in a way found expression in both models but the cited models have failed to accommodate the current and future effects of the evolution and increasing use of the mode. This is in the context of political impacts arising from the organized union of the motorcyclist, the economic results of abandonment of most 'technical workshops' which is the productive aspects of the economy for the fast-growing business of Okada and the observable social malaise associated with the rowdy Okada business. Our data on the users and operators of the mode, and the group interview arising from the experience from the Reconnaissance survey analysed in the coming section determined the levels of the varying impacts.

5. Analysis of data and discussion of results

To do a thorough analysis, the inclusion of the socio, political and economic impact analysis provided a multi-disciplinary approach to the execution of the study. The study depended on extensive field survey as most of the information required is not readily available in secondary sources. The study equally observed that historical data on motorcycle growth are not readily available even in Nigeria because no particular agency is found to be responsible for collecting and storing these data. Hence, the study relied mainly on the motorcycle Union/ Association for generation of relevant data.

To elicit the needed information, the study carried out reconnaissance survey in the city of Ado-Ekiti and determined the locations of various motorcycle units and or parks, their number and the sample size and other logistic requirements for data collection. The reconnaissance surveys are followed immediately by operators/users' survey using a structured questionnaire. 85 students of political science students of the University of Nigeria, Nssuka, Ikere-Ekiti Campus were engaged in the administration of the 'guided' questionnaire. The questionnaires are administered on the operators of motorcycle in addition to the focus group interviews conducted by the researcher. Every motorcycle unit/park identified during reconnaissance survey in the city was covered. A systematic random sampling of one out of every ten motorcycle operators in the city was adopted, resulting to 10% sample size of the operators in the city.

To examine the socio-political and economic aspect of the study, data on political issues, reasons for taking to 'Okada' business, the socio-economic characteristics of the operators such as age, income level, occupational types, educational qualifications and attendant social hazards were well catered for in the operator's questionnaire.

A total of 500 questionnaires were applied on motorcycle commercial riders in a field survey. The survey made use of Ekiti State and Ado Ekiti mainly. This involved the use of probabilistic sampling method with random techniques to pick 500 respondents from Ado Ekiti metropolis and some other parts of Ekiti –State. A total number of 450 questionnaires were found useful after collection and collation. Due to the nature of Okada business and its environment, 100% of the respondents were male.

TABLE 1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Age Group	N (%)
21-30 years	279(62)
31-40 years	144(32)
41-50 years	18(4)
51-Above	9(2)
TOTAL	450(100)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

TABLE 2: MARITAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Marital Status	N (%)
Singles	232(51.1)
Married	218(48.5)
Total	450(100)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

TABLE 3: EDUCATION STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Education Status	N (%)
SSCE Results (Minimum)	181(40.2)
Uncategorised and Below	269(59.8)
Total	450(100)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

6. Specific issues

Questions are asked across varied issues relating to the socio-economic and political impacts of motorcycle as a means of transportation business. The techniques contained several questions. Seven asked specific questions while others sought reasons for certain responses by the respondents.

TABLE 4: MEANS OF MOTORCYCLE ACQUISITION

Means of acquisition	N (%)
Hire	107(33.7)
Personal Savings	222(49.3)
Political gift	42(9.3)
Cooperative loans	62(13.7)
No response	17(3.7)
Total	450(100)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

From Table 4, majority of respondents acquired their motorcycles through personal savings made from the daily hire riding they were previously engaged in.

TABLE 5: ON WAGES AND REINVESTMENT

Wages/Reinvestment	N (%)
Daily wages/income	2,500-3,500
Positive Reinvestment	381(84.7)
Negative Reinvestment	60(13.3)
Indifferent	9(2)
Total	450(100)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

From the survey, it was discovered that the level of Okada business as means of transportation is very high in Ado Ekiti metropolis than other parts of Ekiti. 356 (79.1%) of the respondents affirmed this, most of them further agreed that, daily income become higher (N5, 000) if motorcycle are personally owned by the driver.

TABLE 6: ON WORKING DAYS AND WORKING HOURS IN RELATION TO OTHER WORK

Time given to the Job	N (%)
Full time	270(60)
Part time	169(37.5)
No response	11(2.5)
TOTAL	450(100)
Monday to Sunday	108(24)
Monday to Saturday	268(59.6)
Monday to Friday	32(7.1)
Not Committed	42(9.3)
Total	450(100)

Table 6 indicate that motorcycle operators operate mostly on Mondays to Saturdays and are basically on full time. Sundays are mostly observed as rest and Christian worship days in Nigeria. It is also a work free day in the country.

TABLE 7: ABOUT THE RESIDENCE OF THE OPERATORS

Residence Area	N (%)
Ado Ekiti Metropolis	190(42.2)
From suburbs	235(52.2)
No response	25(5.6)
Total	450(100)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

Table 7 shows that majority of the respondents resides outside Ado Ekiti.

TABLE 8: ON CHARGES PER DROP AND REASONS FOR GOING WITH THE JOB

Charges	N (%)
Average per drop(Distance)	50-150 Naira
Total	N/A

Different reasons were gathered for engaging in the motorcycle business, top among which is unemployment, poverty and a means to be closer to political elites.

TABLE 9: ON THEIR PREVIOUS MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD

Engagements and rewards before MTB	N (%)
Engaged before MTB	277(61.6)
Technical Apprentice	173(38.4)
MTB Pays more	74(16.4)
MTB Brings Political rewards	406(92.2)
Total	N/A

Source: Research data/results (2014)

From Table 9, majority of the respondents agreed that daily income and political rewards are sure in MTB. It is clear also that many left other trades for MTB and prefer MTB than to learn a particular trade, not because of the prospect of a buoyant economy in MTB but that daily income is certain in MTB and that the business appears to be a veritable means of poverty alleviation and a way to meeting the challenges of day to day means of livelihood.

TABLE 10: RESPONDENTS DISTRIBUTIONS ABOUT WHAT THEY DO OUTSIDE MTB

Other trades outside MTB	N (%)
Schooling/waiting for admissions	149(33.1)
Farming	193(42.9)
Politics	108(24)
Total	450(100)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

Table 10 indicates that many of the respondents are of school age.

TABLE 11: ON POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON OKADA UNIONS

Group	N (%)
Agreed Politicians seek supports	430(95.5)
Disagreed	20(4.5)
Total	450(100)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

Table 11 indicates that politicians and incumbent government collaborates and influences the union members in the actualization and sustenance of their political gains.

TABLE 12: MEASURING THE WAYS POLITICIANS USE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

How members are used	N (%)
Voting	209(46.4)
Rallies	237(52.7)
Political thugs	4(0.9)
Rigging during Elections	0(0)
Confess to receiving bribe from Politician	160(35.6)
Disagreed	290(64.5)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

Table 12 shows that the politicians partner the union members in varying degrees of politicking. The low admittance to thuggery and rigging is understandably because of its negative tendencies, even though it happens.

TABLE 13: ON BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUALS FROM POLITICIANS

Nature of Benefits	N (%)
General gift	200(44.5)
Helmet	100(22.2)
Jackets	50(11.1)
Cash	100(22.2)
Total	450(100)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

TABLE 14: TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS ON SOCIAL HAZARDS INVOLVED

Nature of Social Hazards	N (%)
Accidents	265(58.9)
Deaths	29(6.4)
Aiding Kidnapping	12(2.7)
Aiding Stealing and Robbery	21(4.7)
Mob actions	123(27.3)
Total	450(100)

Source: Research data/results (2014)

From the focused interview, the respondents sought for various assistances ranging from employment generation, soft loans, financial assistance and a creation of an enabling environment for Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) to thrive among others.

7. Findings

From the late 1980s, at the wake of the Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria when the country's economy began to decline, jobless youths began to use motorcycles to earn money by transporting passengers on narrow or poorly maintained roads in cities and villages. Owing to relative low cost of using 'Okada' for transport, (from maintenance to fuel economy) It quickly became popular nationwide. Today, in Nigeria, it has become one of the primary modes of transportation patronized regularly by young and old, men and women.

In the study, located mainly in Ado-Ekiti (Nigeria) metropolis, the survey shows that, though most people agree that 'Okada' has become a menace on our roads, yet several Nigerians, including graduate who find it hard to secure white-collar jobs, are now earning their living by operating 'Okada' and it appears they

would find it difficult to survive without 'Okada' business. To most road users, it has become an indispensable means of transportation.

Our critical discovery in this study however is that, about 61.6 per cent of our respondents agreed that they are now engaged in 'Okada' business having abandoned their various trades as artisans, not because of a prospect of buoyant economy but that daily income and easy access to political elites are sure and almost certain. This is dangerous for a developing economy like that of Nigeria from all indications. The projection in this study is that by year 2020, Nigeria productive economy would have declined to a ridiculous extent as employment generation, technical education, and self-reliant job growth would have been trapped by the 'Okada' economy. This is regardless of the ambitious vision 20, 2020 of becoming one of the 20 top economies.

Again, it is clear that 'Okada Unions' are becoming second arms of political parties, forming strong pressure influences and 'stated groups', which can be motivated by politicians to attain political gains. They could also in turn disrupt societal peace if dumped after use. Few years ago, the Lagos State road traffic law bans operation of commercial motorcyclist on 475 out of the over 9,010 routes in Lagos State of Nigeria, the group reacted promptly and sharply destroying more than 40 buses of Road Transit vehicles belonging to Lagos State government and went further to halt all movement of vehicles, making bonfires on the road (see the Nation (Nig.) Newspapers Editorial, Nov.6, 2012 p.19). The protest that ensued was so much that it was reported "as a battle over traffic law" (Mordi, 2012: 52).

On social hazards, this study confirms an increasing rate of accidents, robberies and kidnapping with the use of motorcycles on the roads. Official figures compiled by the Planning and Research department of Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) and corroborated by Police records shows that not less than 619 people had been killed or seriously injured in commercial motorcycle accidents across the state between January 2010 and October 2012; of the number, 107 people died while 512 sustained serious injuries from the accidents (The Nation (Nig.) Newspaper editorials, Nov. 6, 2012:19). The Newspaper further revealed that on security, the Lagos State Commissioner of Police disclosed that of the 30-armed robbery incidents recorded between the months of July and September 2012, 22 were clinically done with the use of Okada motorcycle. These were besides the paper's complaints of population and environmental hazards as many drop-outs just leave their states for Lagos

to take up Okada jobs and that most others abandon their learned trades to make quick money from Okada operations.

8. Policy Options and Conclusions

To correct these anomalies and secure a socio-political and economic future for the country as a developing nation, the policy options are not many, it is equally hard and 'short time' costly but of a future prosperity. If Nigeria will lift itself from the impending shrunk of productive economy, attains a better height of political behaviour and rescue something out of the present downward slope of its social ethics: a total ban, control or a restriction on the use of commercial motorcycle' is one of the crucial steps to be taken. Abuja, Nigeria has effectively implemented a total ban on its use in the Capital Territory, forcing them to the suburbs. Lagos State of Nigeria had started the enforcement of the new Lagos Traffic Law 2012 where the dos and don'ts of commercial motorcycle operation are clearly stated.

While the reactions are expectedly spontaneous, on the restrictions, the immediate gains in Lagos State are showing that the end justifies the means. Reports are showing that 'Artisans are Counting gains of Okada restriction in Lagos' (Dodondawa, 2012: 39); Okada robbery accidents are on the decline' (Oseghale, 2012: 24).

The states in Nigeria needs to develop a political will like Lagos State, ignore the existing personal and political primordial interest of the state political actors and take a decisive step that will force the populated productive age of men and women back to ventures that will grow the economy, guarantee democracy as a collective interest and raise social life to the 21st Century expectations. Ekiti state of Nigeria could start with a biometric registration of all owners and operators of commercial motorcycles to identify genuine stakeholders in the state motorcycle sector; secure information requisite for the provision of a safe and secure environment for the people of the state. This may also help the government to start the needed ban or restriction on commercial motorcycle operations and hence productively combat crime while driving the economy for productive ventures. The study ultimately places a responsibility on Government on the need to have a long-term plan on its economic transformation agenda that will guide against 'Okada' becoming a "mono-economic" structure of the state. There is the urgent need for the Government to initiate law and control on the 'Okada' operation in its present transmutation to political pressure group and its activities creating social problems. Every developing economy needs such a

‘biting’ reform, if it intends to close the ‘generational gap’ between the developed and developing economy and catch up with the rest of the globalized world.

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