

Research Article

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Appears innocent but dangerous: Accounting views and perception of property crime by motorcycle riders in Anambra state

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Abstract

Keywords

Dangerous,
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views.

The recurring ugly decimal of property crime by motorcycle riders is a topical issue that has become a nightmare to Nigerians. Previous studies on property crime have not focused attention on understanding the public view of property crime by commercial motorcycle riders. This study examines the public perception of property crime by motorcycle riders with particular attention to Anambra State. The study is anchored on structural strain theory of Robert K. Merton. The sample size of 400 was drawn from a population of 299097. The study recommends that there is need for sustainable pragmatic and synergic intervention involving the federal and state governments, the private sector and richly endowed individuals in addressing the issue of property crime by motorcycle riders. Furthermore, the government should create enabling environment to promote investments and job opportunities for the youths.

Introduction

Nigeria's population is expected to grow from about 169 million to more than 200 million making it the fifth most populated country in the world after India, China, USA and Pakistan (Shaibu, 2014; Eze, Ajah, Nwonovo & Atama, 2021; Ajah, Uwakwe, Nwokeoma, Ugwuoke &

Nnamani, 2020; Ajah, 2019; Ajah, 2018). This has caused the inability of the available commercial vehicles to meet the teeming population of the country in addition with the parlous state of Nigeria road. In attempt to seek for alternative means of transportation, the use of motorcycle as one of unconventional means of public transportation arose.

Currently, studies have shown that unconventional public transportation has become widespread, and the use of motorcycle for public transportation is one of such modes of transport in the country. In the words of Gbasanmosi (2006), the use of motorcycles as a means of transport came into being in the early 1980s in few urban areas in Nigeria. And since then, commercial motorcycles popularly called (Okada) have become a common mode of transport in areas of the country where the conventional public transport system services were not available (Ogunsanya & Galtima, 1993; Ajah, Nnam, Ajah, Idemili-Aronu, Chukwumeka & Agboti, 2021; Ajah, Ajah & Obasi, 2020).

Expectedly, apart from quick transport services which commercial motorcycles provide in Nigeria, it is also a source of employment to the teeming unemployed youths in the country. According to the National Population Commission (NPoC, 2013), about half of the population is made up of youth, defined as individuals between 15 and 34 years of age. Unfortunately, as the youth population grows, so does the unemployment rate. In fact, some unemployed youths have utilized the opportunities created by the use commercial motorcycle as a means of public transportation.

Interestingly, among the *commercial motorcycle* riders are some well-educated persons, including university graduates, who only took to it, as a last resort after years of fruitless search for job. Madunago (2004) observed that the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced in Nigeria by General Ibrahim Babangida in 1986 worsened the socio-economic hardship of many workers in urban centers of Nigeria. As a result of this economic policy, many Nigerian workers lost their jobs through retrenchment. This brought a great burden on the citizens who now have to source for alternative means of survival or livelihood. Hence, SAP brought about mass retrenchment and many of the retrenched workers, became commercial motorcycle riders. As the economic situation keeps worsening, the number of commercial motorcycle riders keeps increasing in the country (Ajah, Dinne & Salami, 2020; Ajah &

Onyejegbu, 2019; Anthony, Obasi, Obi, Ajah, Okpan, Onyejegbu, Obiwulu & Onwuama, 2021; Areh, Onwuama & Ajah, 2020).

Ironically, commercial motorcycle has evolved to become a smart instrument used by criminal elements to commit various forms of property crime. This has constituted a cog in the wheel of socio-economic development and progress of Nigeria. Accordingly, Okoro (2004) observed that crimes associated with commercial motorcyclists have been on the increase in Nigeria. The frequent occurrence of these crimes has become a major source of worry not only to the government but the generality of the masses. Indeed, since Nigerians extol the frivolous acquisition of wealth in the forms of property and material resources (Igbo, 1999; Ugwuoke. 2010; Ugwuoke, Ajah & Onyejegbu, 2020; Nnam, Ajah, Arua, Okechukwu & Okorie, 2019; Nnam, Effiong, Iloma, Terfa & Ajah, 2021), it should not be surprising that property crimes are the most prevalent offences in the country. Property crime is a category of crime that includes, among other crimes, burglary, larceny, theft, motor vehicle theft, arson, shoplifting, and vandalism. Property crime involves the taking of one's property by force or threat of force against the person's will.

Types of property crimes associated with commercial motorcycle riders.

In Nigeria, property crime by commercial motorcycle riders has become a disturbing and topical issue to scholars and most Nigerians. Daily, stories abound of pick-pocketing, assaults, snatching of valuable properties, stabbing, raping and ritual in public transportation. In the words of Francis and Andrew (1995), the influx of commercial motorcycle is linked to an increase in crime in cities around the world, particularly in city centres, urban slums, and red light districts. The criminal activities range from theft of purses and mobile phones, vehicle parts to abduction, grand larceny, and to even politically motivated murder. They are also associated with theft of vehicle parts, receiving stolen property, robbery and cheating. Bassey (2009) opined that crime against property in Nigeria, outstrips crime

against person. This could be as a result of sentimental values Nigerians attaches to acquisition of property. Crimes against property are thus generally the most prevalent in the country.

A cursory look at crime occurrence and offenders in Anambra State shows that some commercial motorcycle riders are involved in crime against property such as vehicle parts theft, snatching of handbags and phones, duping of not only their passengers but unsuspecting pedestrians. Okoye (2004) observed that commercial motorcycle riders in the state were becoming increasingly implicated in officially reported cases of criminality like armed robbery, stealing of peoples properties, kidnapping as well as gang-beating. He argued further that the operation of motorcycle riders in the state is now suspicious.

For Udoh (2009), some of the commercial motorcycles riders spies on the unsuspecting members of the public with the intention of coming later to steal an identified property or passing information to some criminal elements. Some of the riders as he observed harnesses information they receive from their passengers by turning later to steal from them. Some of them are associated with bank robbery; some even steal within the church (church property). Effah (2005) rightly argued that some commercial motorcyclists are contracted by politicians to steal ballot boxes and other materials to aid in rigging elections in Nigeria. To him, some politicians have resorted to using commercial motorcyclists to hijack ballot boxes because it is easy to escape with motorcycle than motor vehicle. Some commercial motorcycle riders can disappear with goods given to them for delivery by their passengers.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is the structural strain theory of Robert K. Merton. This theory was propounded by Robert K. Merton (1957), in developing this theory, Merton made reference to Durkheim's notion of anomie, which is a social condition in which people who

have weak ties with the community find it difficult to know what to do because social norms are unclear or have broken down. The concept of anomie according to Durkheim simply means state of normlessness or absence of norms. Merton attributed crime to the strain people experience in the society as a result of the disjuncture between cultural goals and the socially approved means for achieving these goals.

In the society, a person's success in life is measured by things like flashy cars, nice home, the latest fashion, the schools attended by one's children, etc. the socially acceptable ways of achieving success are working hard, and getting a good job. In an ideal world, everybody becomes successful if you adhere strictly to the rules, but in the real world, we should observe that some people who are poor and belong to the lower class may have little or no formal education and few economic resources to create opportunities for them to achieve the cultural goals. Merton noted that this group of people may experience strain which may lead them to crime and deviance.

This strain could create room where people use inappropriate, unconventional and illegal means to achieve success or the societal goals, an example is when motorcycle riders rob their passengers instead of taking them to their agreed destinations. More unfortunate is the role being played by the 21st century parents who would rather give their children unhealthy orientation and expose them to unrealistic lifestyles the orientation their own parents never gave them, all in the name of 'my child must not suffer what I suffered. Many of the things children are exposed to nowadays are not sustainable in futuristic terms, hence these children would grow up craving for what they could not afford and, of course eventually get involved in crime.

Methodology

Design and Area of the Study

Cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. The study was conducted in Anambra State. Anambra state is one of the five states in South East Nigeria. The Capital is Awka. Onitsha and Nnewi are the biggest commercial and industrial cities, respectively. The state shares boundary with Delta, Imo, Abia, Rivers, Enugu and Kogi State. The people of the state are ethnically Igbo with (98% of the population) and a small population of Igala (2% of the population) who live mainly in the north-western part of the state.

Population of the Study and Sample Size

The population for this study was 299097. From this population, a sample size of 400 respondents was drawn using Yamane (1967) method of sample size determination. The formula for the sample size estimation is given as:

n = the sample size
 N = the population size
 e = the level of precision (allowable error) that is 5% or 0.05.

Therefore, the sample size estimation is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{299097}{1 + 299097(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{299097}{748}$$

n = 400 approximately

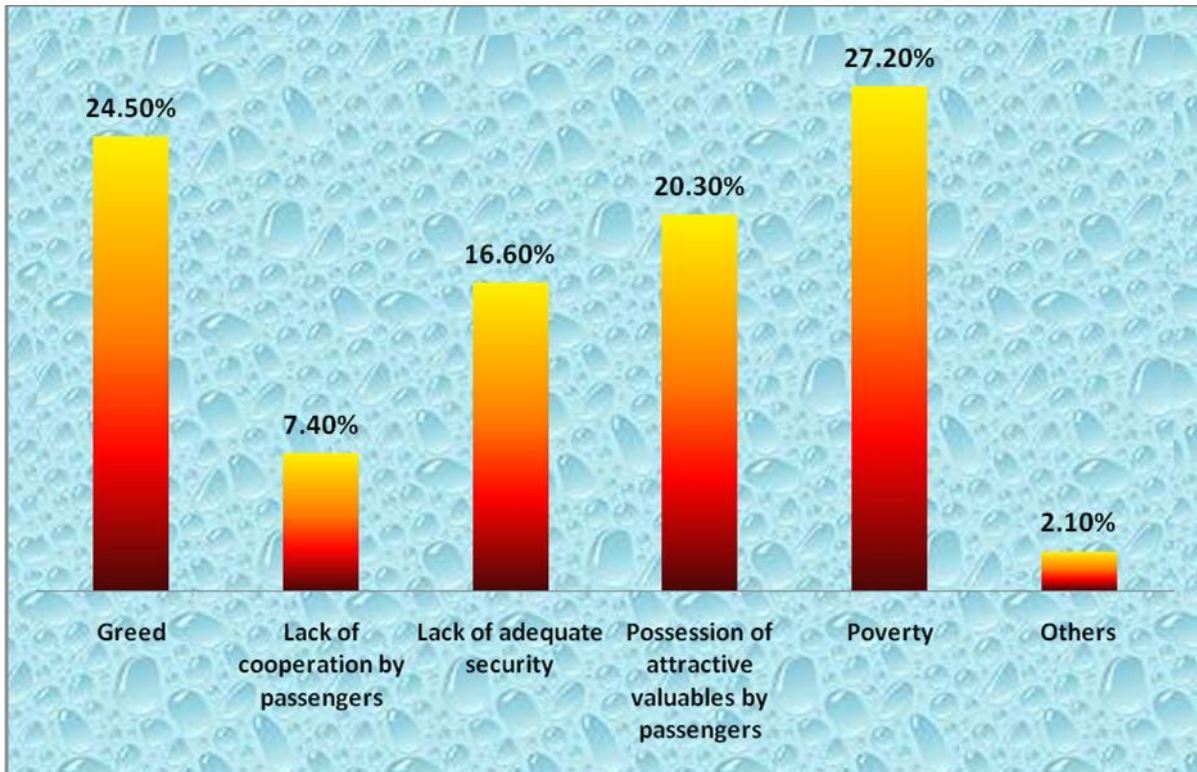
Methods of Data Collection

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used in this study. The methods were divided into two: primary and secondary methods. The primary methods used were questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data from the respondents. The questionnaire consists of closed-ended and few open-ended questions. The questionnaire consists of two sections; section 'A' which addressed the demographic characteristics of respondents such as age, sex, educational qualification etc, while section B addressed the substantive issues of the research. For the purpose of triangulation, the In-depth Interview Guide (IDI) was designed for the qualitative aspect of the study. This was used to complement the quantitative instruments of data collection for this study. The In-depth Interview was derived from the specific objectives of the study.

Results and Discussion

400 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, out of which only 379 copies, representing 94.6% of the questionnaires were properly filled and collected back by the researcher, against 5.4% copies that were not collected back. The number that returned their questionnaire formed the basis for this analysis.

Figure 1: Factors that propel commercial motorcycle riders to indulge in property crime



(Source: Field Survey, 2015).

The data in figure 1 shows that whereas (27.2%) of the respondents were of the view that poverty is a major factor which propels commercial motorcycle riders to indulge in property crime, (24.5%) of them indicated that “greed” is the major propelling factor. Only 20.3% of them

averted that “possession of attractive valuables by passengers” is the main factor, while 16.6% of them implicated lack of adequate security while. Only 7.4% of them attributed it to “lack of cooperation by passengers”.

Table 1: Respondents’ view on whether the less educated commercial motorcyclists steal more than the educated ones.

| Variables | Frequency | Percent % |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes | 274 | 72.3 |
| No | 68 | 17.9 |
| I Can’t Say | 28 | 7.4 |
| Valid Total | 370 | 97.6 |
| Missing Values | 9 | 2.4 |
| Total | 379 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents perceive property crimes by commercial motorcyclists as being carried out mostly by those who are low in their level of

formal educational attainment. This finding is not different from the findings from the in-depth interview, on the same issue.

Yes of course, it is those touts in the Okada business that constitute nuisance and exhibit criminal behaviour in the state. You can easily notice them in their manner of driving, they hardly obey traffic rules, in fact majority of them did not go to school and I think what the

authorities concerned should do is to start issuing licences to Okada riders base on one’s educational qualification, the business should not be left for touts alone anymore.(IDI, State Commandant Federal Road Safety Commission (FRCN) Anambra State).

Table 2: Respondents’ views on whether or not Commercial motorcycle riders steal people’s property more in urban location than in rural location.

| Variables | Frequency | Percent % |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes | 283 | 74.7 |
| No | 33 | 8.7 |
| I Can’t Say | 51 | 13.5 |
| Valid Total | 367 | 96.8 |
| Missing Values | 12 | 3.2 |
| Total | 379 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

Table 2 shows that a majority of the respondents are of the view that commercial motorcycle riders steal people’s property more in the urban locations than in the rural locations. Those who were neutral (I can’t say) were relatively higher than those who disagreed with the proposition. In other words, the use of commercial motorcycles in property crimes commission is perceived by the members of the public, to be higher in the urban locations more than the rural settings. This finding is in line with the findings made through the in-depth interview as a respondent quoted thus:

Yes, many individuals run to the cities with the quest to making money, coupled with their relatives/friends expectations of them coming back with better fortunes; when such is not coming forth from them, they tend to devise criminal means to make it fast by stealing, they hire Okada and hit the road robbing people. To answer your question, some Okada riders in the city are criminals who left the village because they are well known there; they now enter the city and hire Okada to start unleashing mayhem on the innocent people in the city. So, I don’t expect this type of criminality to be experienced at the same level in the rural settings though it happens there too (IDI, The chairman of road transport workers Anambra State).

Table 3: Respondents’ view on the whether or not lonely streets are crime zones for commercial motorcycle riders.

| Variables | Frequency | Percent % |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|
| Agree | 236 | 62.3 |
| Disagree | 75 | 19.8 |
| Not Certain | 63 | 16.6 |
| Valid Total | 374 | 96.8 |
| Missing Values | 5 | 1.3 |
| Total | 379 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

The data in table 2 shows that a majority of the respondents (62.3%) agreed that lonely streets are crime zones for commercial motorcycle operatives. A lower proportion of the respondents disagreed to this while 16.6% of them were not

certain about it. This finding goes to show that the environment plays a part in facilitating the criminal activities of commercial motorcycle riders.

Figure 2: Respondents’ response on whether or not young commercial motorcycle riders steal people’s property more than the older ones

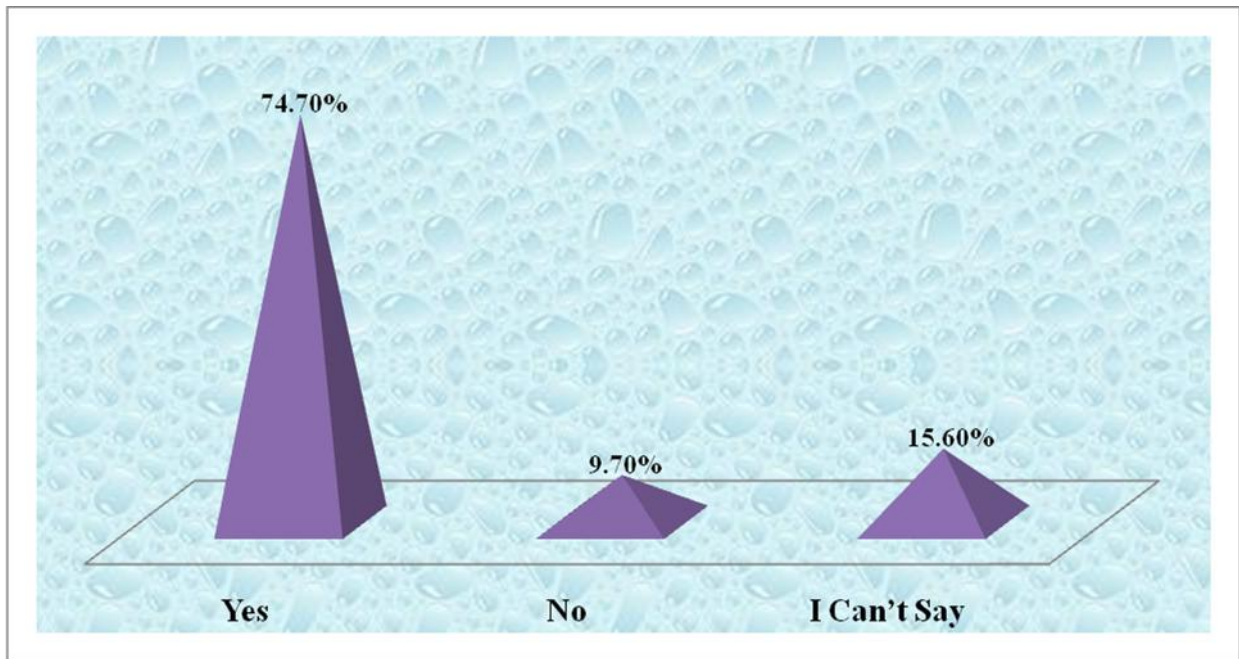


Figure 2 shows that whereas (74.7%) of the respondents have the view that young commercial motorcycle riders steal peoples’ property more than the older ones, 15.6% of them couldn’t say for sure. Only 9.7% disagreed with this view. From the in-depth interview, a participant noted that:

I feel that young Okada riders are more inclined to stealing more than the older ones because the cases I have treated here as a security officer involve more of the younger ones (IDI, Chairman Ifite-Awka Community Local Vigilante, Awka South, Anambra State).

A female victim respondent who responded in Pidgin English said: “Na all those small-small boys weydey drive okadadey steal our things, no be the adults”. This statement means that it is the younger commercial motorcycle riders that are more involved in property crimes.

These findings supports Agba, Ogaboh and Michael (2013); Adeniran’s (2006) and Ihejianaizu and Egbe (2001), which noted that greed for material acquisition and increasing level of poverty especially among youths are the major factors that propel commercial motorcycle riders to property crimes. The strain theory also suggests that poverty due to blocked opportunity structures, induce individuals to adopt adaptive mechanisms to survive. Hence, to answer research question 3, the above findings suggest that poverty and greed are the major propelling factor towards the commission of property crimes by commercial motorcycle riders. Other factors as indicated above include educational qualification, age of the commercial motorcycle rider and the possession of valuable properties by the passengers, ineffective security network among others.

Conclusion

While many policies and programmes have been made and adopted towards addressing the issue of property crime by commercial motorcycle riders, the outcomes have been greatly limited by a host of factors. These factors include but not limited by the poor administration, inconsistent policies and weak security system. This is worsened by rancid educational and economic policies that pay cursory attention to unemployment, coupled with unyielding and formidable peer pressure.

Against the above view, our security system must be fortified to facilitate strong contracts and protect mutual trust of Nigerians. Also, there is need for sustainable pragmatic and synergic intervention involving the federal and state governments, the private sector and richly endowed individuals in addressing the issue of property crime by motorcycle riders. Government should create enabling environment to promote investments and job opportunities for the youths. This includes provision of power and maintaining law and order since unemployment is one of the major causes of property crime. Agriculture is a viable source of investments for young people if it is made attractive. There should be a swift transition from subsistence to commercialized farming. Farm and non-farm activities should be better packaged to make them really attractive.

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