

# MOTORCYCLE BAN AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS ON UYO METROPOLIS OF AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

**Ikot, A. S.**

**\*Akpan, U. U.**

*Temple Gate Polytechnic, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria*

*\*E-mail: unychrist2004@yahoo.com*

**Benson, P. J.**

*Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria*

**Etim, O. P.**

*Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria*

## ABSTRACT

*This survey was conducted with the primary aim of assessing the Economic Implications of Motorcycle Ban in Uyo Metropolis of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire, personal observations and interviews; and analyzed using simple percentage and frequency counts. The population of the study comprised all tricycle operators in Uyo metropolis. Stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting one hundred respondents from the study area. The result revealed among others that though government has made tremendous efforts in tackling the problems of urban transportation within Uyo municipality, yet the spate of insecurity and crime in the State may not be unconnected with the recent ban of motorcycle operation in the municipality. Based on this, it was recommended amidst others that government should create more job opportunities as well as skill acquisition centres where most of the motorcyclists who have been affected can be trained on various trades and empower the graduates to kick start small businesses of their own so as to be able to carter for themselves and families.*

**Keywords:** *Motorcycle ban, economic implication, transportation, Metropolis*

## INTRODUCTION

Motorcycle can be traced from the ancient times to the contemporary. The first motorcycle was designed and built by two German inventors; Gottlieb Daimler and Wilhelm Maybach, in a city district of Stuttgart in 1885 ([http://www.demonscycle.com/Shop/Control/fp/user/demons/view\\_page/Invention](http://www.demonscycle.com/Shop/Control/fp/user/demons/view_page/Invention)). Perhaps, the first fuel powered vehicle was essentially called motorized bicycle, although the inventors called it "the Reitwagen (Riding car)" ([http://www.demonscycle.com/Shop/Control/fp/user/demons/view\\_page/Invention](http://www.demonscycle.com/Shop/Control/fp/user/demons/view_page/Invention)). If a two wheeled vehicle with steam propulsion is termed motorcycle, then it suffices to say that the first of such may have been from the American origin, because one of such machines is stated to have been demonstrated in fairs and circuses in the Eastern US in 1967, built by Sylvester Howard Roper of Roxbury ([http://www.demonscycle.com/Shop/Control/fp/user/demons/view\\_page/Invention](http://www.demonscycle.com/Shop/Control/fp/user/demons/view_page/Invention)). According to ([http://www.demonscycle.com/Shop/Control/fp/user/demons/view\\_page/Invention](http://www.demonscycle.com/Shop/Control/fp/user/demons/view_page/Invention)) in 1894, Hilderbrand and Wolfnuller became the first brand of motorcycle available. From then on, many producers of motorcycles emerged adopting their design to accommodate the new internal combustion engine. As the engines

became more powerful and designs out grew the use of bicycle, the number of motorcycles producers increased Wikipedia (2007). Motorcycle came into Nigeria many years ago as a matter of necessity. The poor state of most roads in the country among other reasons made the automobile to gain acceptance in the Nigerian market. Every person that rides motorcycle is termed a motorcyclist. Nevertheless, while some people ride motorcycle for pleasure, as sport or to execute private businesses, others ride it as a means of livelihood. In other words, some use it for the business of conveying people from one place to another for a fare. This group of persons is called commercial motorcyclists. According to Atubi (2006); Ebimomi, (2007); Wikipedia, (2007) motorcycle is one of the chief modes of transport in Nigeria, and by far, the most common form of informal transport system in the country. Nevertheless, the value of motorcycle mostly in the rural communities as a means of transportation is not taken for granted. Motorcycles have adapted easily to the prevailing economic climates in contemporary Nigerian society plagued by a dearth of taxi and bus services, hyper-congestion, and poor state of roads (Wikipedia, 2007).

Commercial motorcyclists are people who carry on the business of using motorcycle to convey people and or things (small luggage) from one place to another within a community. In the local parlance, this group of people is often referred to as “*aka uke*” (where are you going), “*nwatawat*” (characterised by their usual complain of not making any money out of the business), and in English slogan as “how far” among other sobriquets. In spite of the good services this group of people render to members of the society, their violent and rough manners of handling their passengers as well as disrupting the peace of the society calls for serious concern. Some of them constitute nuisance in the society by way of violating traffic rules and regulations and showing lackadaisical attitudes to human lives and property. While some of these attitudes can be attributed to inexperience, a greater fraction of their behaviour can be attributed to arrogance, pride, greed and above all frustration in life. This has made the motorcycle business to be viewed by many reasonable humans as a business for charlatans in Nigeria.

This notwithstanding the population of commercial motorcyclist is said to be on the increase in the country due to such reasons as poverty, unemployment, economic situation characterized by high cost of living and poor infrastructural development. Excessive population growth and poor birth control are not neglected as some of the factors leading to the increase in the population of this group of people in the society. When the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme was newly introduced, a youth corps member had the assurance of having a job at the completion of his/her national assignment. Today, the reverse is the case. Commercial motorcycling is the most readily available job for the youths and the aged even when a good number of them are inexperienced and are oblivious of certain road signs and rules. Unfortunately, its operation in most cases has been accompanied by increased level of risk of accidents, bad behaviours, reckless driving, poor attitude of the operators and resistance to laudable government policies among others.

A vibrant economy is characterized by the rate of commercial activities going on within the system. It is equally characterized by the number of active youths who are self employed therefore not relying solely on the government for white collar jobs. Despite

some of the associated problems of commercial motorcycle operators, it is the readily available means of livelihood to most youths, graduates, undergraduates and the illiterates. The ban of motorcycle operation in Uyo metropolis on one hand can be seen as a welcome development. That is, when taking the associated vices such as dubious dealings and double-crossing of their innocent passengers into consideration. On the other hand, it can be seen as a serious threat to economic development, stability and sustainability, viewing it from the standpoint of taking away a person's whole life time source of income without putting in place a substantive substitute to provide for the affected parties. Inasmuch as the economic life of the affected individual members of the commercial motorcyclists as a result of the ban is shattered, if there is no alternative means of survival; the corresponding effect is on the economic life of the entire society. Therefore, the economic consequences or implications of the recent motorcycle ban in Uyo capital city is the utmost concern that led to this study.

### **ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF MOTORCYCLE BAN IN UYO METROPOLIS**

Transportation is one of the most serious problems that confronts human existence. This is probably the reason Mobogunje (1986) citing Badejo and Bawa Allah (2000) says that transportation system problem is the major disorder affecting land use development pattern. According to Mobogunje (1986), the consequence emanating from the problem of transportation system includes economic, social and environmental. Unprecedented rate of development of various routes in most urban cities continuously resulted into considerable rate of growth pattern, such growth has been in momentum since and further large portion of the area have been seriously developed in most cities, it is therefore very essential at this point, so that more quantitative measures will be put in place in ensuring better organized public transportation system in such emerging urban cities.

Following the recent trends of insecurity and crime in Akwa Ibom State in general and Uyo Metropolis in particular, it will not in any way tantamount an exaggeration saying that there are not unconnected with the recent ban in commercial motorcycle operations among others. The axiom, "an idle mind is the devils workshop" is ideal. In the global society, the devils workshop is the global society itself. This is so because all manners of vices are perpetrated within its bounds. This results in economic squirm, instability and recession.

Any Economic boom or recession is as a result of the product of human activities.

For instance, excessive borrowing led to the recent bursting of the financial houses in the United States of America which translated into what is termed today as global economic crisis (Udoka, 2010). Every action of man affects a nation's economy directly or indirectly. No matter one's place or social status, his or her actions have some implications on the growth of the nation's economy. Government polices and programmes equally have direct consequence on the economic life of the nation. The recent ban on the operation of motorcycles in Uyo Metropolis without mincing words has posed serious threats on the Akwa Ibom State economic life. These threats or implications for the essence of this study will be discussed under insecurity, crime, and unemployment.

**Insecurity:** The spate of insecurity ravaging the society today has inflicted on many mostly innocent souls untold hardship, pain and sorrow. Like the University or Polytechnic and other institutions of higher learning will pour out large number of job hungry graduates into the labour market, so is the recent ban on the operation of motorcycle in some States of the country. As the number of graduates seeking for employment outnumber the available jobs, the rate of insecurity of lives and property noses-dives in some cities especially those that have come up with such government policies as ban of motorcycle operations. This has led to interstate insecurity problem coupled with other vices. This is so because there is definitely a shift of those operators who are affected in their areas of operation to areas yet to be affected. This leads to increase in the population of the migrated area.

The weight of this shift is directly heaped on the economic status of the area migrated to. For instance, when Abia State ban motorcycle operation; Akwa Ibom State witnessed an increase in the population of motorcycle operators because of the movement of other commercial motorcycle operators into the State. This actually has significant influence on the security situation of the State.

**Crime:** The present Nigerian economy in absolute terms may be characterized by lawlessness of diverse dimensions. This could take the form of violence, thuggery, robbery, etc. The taking away of one's source of livelihood is enough to evoke violence both at family, group, and societal levels. The affected parties could see thuggery as a veritable means of making ends meet. This places them in a vulnerable position in the corridors of heartless politicians who use thuggery as political vendetta. Robbery, armed or unarmed receives a cordial embrace from jobless and hungry members of society especially those who are seriously aggrieved of been sabotaged. Though not peculiar to the younger generation only yet it is prevalent among them. Some elderly and well placed patriots who suppose to be good ambassadors appreciate and encourage crime.

Sometimes, government policies are good intentions for the citizens but invariably, a gap is often created as these policies are wrongly communicated to members of society. Gaps to engage in criminal activities. In the context of what is the main issue of this work, some affected parties see the ban of motorcycle in the study area as an avenue to perpetrate crimes of various weights and magnitudes; this however is no excuse because ignorance is not an excuse before the law.

**Unemployment:** Human beings are characterized by varying degrees of resilience. While some can bounce back fast after a shakeup, others crawl and in some cases give in. It is not debatable that those who took to commercial motorcycling over time saw it as an employment they have created for themselves. To a point they did it, stabilized and started planning their lives and future. The recent upturn of the sector throws all of them to the labour market again in search for anything to do to survive including committing crime. If their services with motorcycles are not considered useful any more, it is important to note that they (the operators) are still useful, therefore for society to experience tranquility, the fact that they are still relevant in the scheme of things should be taken into consideration by the appropriate authorities.

## METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is a survey. Data were collected using structured questionnaire, personal observations and interviews. The population of the study comprises all the tricycle operators in Uyo metropolis of Akwa Ibom State. The tricycle operators spread across all the major locations in Uyo metropolis, but for the purpose of this work, the respondents were drawn from Ibom plaza environs (Oron Road, Abak Road, Ikot Ekpene Road, Aka Road and Barracks Road). Through stratified random sampling, twenty tricycle operators were sampled at each of these locations giving a total sample size of 100. These locations were purposively chosen. The researcher also assisted the illiterate respondents by reading and interpreting the questionnaire to them to facilitate speedy and accurate information. The questionnaire was structured such that it demanded only a yes or no answer. The personal interview gave detailed information of the situation as it bothers on the study. Data were analyzed using simple percentage and frequency counts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1:** Educational background of respondents

Academic Level	Number of Respondent	% Response
Primary School	20	20
Secondary School	25	25
Tertiary Institutions	40	40
No Education	15	15
Total	100	100

**Source:** Fieldwork 2011.

The table 1 reveals that majority of the respondents were graduates followed by secondary schools. Further findings revealed that some among them were students and were using the business to fund themselves in their respective schools. Another in the order is the primary school leavers. A small fraction never attended school. The table is in consonant with one of the personal interviews conducted which revealed that some of the tricycle riders took to it pending when they will have their dream job. It is obvious from this appraisal that the rate of unemployment has increased as a result of the downturn in the commercial motorcyclists operation. This is not precluding other vices as insecurity and crime.

**Table 2:** Marital Status of Respondents.

Variables	No. of Respondent	% Response
Married	40	40
Unmarried	60	60
Total	100	100

**Source:** Fieldwork 2011.

From table 2 above, though the number of unmarried operators outnumbers that of the married, yet the numbers of the married operators attracts concern. This is because some of them who are unable to acquire the tricycle or find who to give them on hired purchase will find it difficult to feed their families let alone sending them to school as well as meeting other needs such as health. This corroborates the personal interview where one of the respondents; an educated person said:

*I don't have any other job apart from this since I left the University in 2001. So I borrowed some money from people to add to the little savings I had to buy this*



*tricycle (he was not referring to Keke NAPEP but the tricycle generally). I try to drive as careful as possible because I still enjoy the company of my wife and children. I am a family man with 2 children.*

**Table 3:** How did you get your Tricycle?

Variables	No. of Respondents	% Response
On hired purchase	25	25
The government subsidized the cost for you	30	30
Bought with personal savings	25	25
Borrowed money to buy it	20	20
Total	100	100

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2011.

Table 3 reveals that some of the respondents operate the tricycle business on hired purchase basis. Some borrowed to buy while others bought with their personal savings. Greater proportion of the respondents maintained that the tricycles were subsidized by the Akwa Ibom State Government. Those who operate on hired purchase lamented in the interview segment that they are to remit between N650,000 to N700,000 within one year to their principal before they can start benefiting wholly from the proceeds of the operation. Another respondent indicated that the government subsidized tricycle goes for between N250,000 to N300,000. While self acquired tricycles sells for between N350,000 to N400,000. Impressively, some of the respondents indicated that the high cost of the tricycle notwithstanding, they were able to break-even and make good money when the operators were not as much as they are now. According to these respondents the tricycle pays much more than motorcycle since more than three passengers can be conveyed at a time. Further findings revealed this position to be true.

## PERSONAL INTERVIEW

**Issue 1:** Do you know anybody who used to do commercial motorcycling that has not had the tricycle to use for business?

A sample of some respondents through personal interview revealed that so many of the motorcycle operators are still roaming the streets every day in search of what to do to feed. Another respondent said that most of his colleagues since they were unable to purchase the tricycle did not surrender their motorcycle. In his words:

*they are using their motorcycles to do business in other parts of the State that are not affected such as Ikot Ekpene, Abak, Etinan and so on.*

**Issue 2:** Do you think that this ban will have any negative effect on the society?

In what could be described as an aggressive response, one of the respondents snappily interrupted:

*Why not, do you think those guys who do not have the money to buy the tricycle will take it funny? No matter what it is, they have to survive in whatever way or ways they can. In this case, you do not have to blame it on them". It is what the society wants and must get. That is the truth.*

This response is what was gotten from a meaningful proportion of the respondents. However, a good number of them were of the opinion that the government policy was a welcome development as most of their colleagues were using the business as a cover to perpetrate

crime which was later generalized to all commercial motorcyclists. They however, said that government should initiate programmes that will address the case of insecurity, crime and unemployment for the interest of the larger society as several vices are going on within the State since the enforcement of this ban. This corroborates the view of one of the respondents who affirmed the incidence of increase rampant snatching of handbags and collecting of money and other valuables from passersby at gun point in Ikot Ekpene and other towns since the ban was enforced.

Further findings revealed some of the segments of the tricycle operators. One is that with the inscription Keke NAPEP. The NAPEP here means National Poverty Eradication Programme instituted by the Apex government. This suggests that those ones are subsidized by the federal government of Nigeria through the National Poverty Eradication Programme. Another is the one subsidized by the Akwa Ibom State government and carries the inscription APCOMA (Akwa Ibom Professional and Commercial Motorcyclist Association). Others within this category carry the inscription Akwa Ibom State Life Enhancement Programme. The self-acquired or the ones acquired through hired purchase contract is another category. Others are financed by some microfinance banks and carry the inscription of their respective financiers. What was observed to be the distinction between the State subsidized and the self acquired or hired purchase contract tricycles was that the last group has no inscription on it. The respondents equally indicated that it is not all the tricycles seen that are indigenous. They revealed that some of the operators came from States like Abia, Imo, Cross River, Rivers, Bayelsa and Enugu States.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The activities of motorcyclists as one of the chief major mode of transportation cannot be overemphasized. However, there are times in the life cycle of things that a change becomes absolutely imperative. In the history of Akwa Ibom State, it has become imperative to change for what is viewed as a more enhanced system of transportation within the urban city of Uyo; criticisms notwithstanding. It is a welcome development; however, what is worth doing is worth doing well. It has been observed during the course of this work that most of those operating the tricycle are not conversant with its operation. There is gross violation of traffic rules and so on. Regardless of this, there is clear evidence from the analysis that Akwa Ibom State government has made commendable efforts in tackling the problem of urban transportation in Uyo metropolis in particular and Akwa Ibom State in general through the subsidized tricycle scheme. Nevertheless, this study has equally appreciated the fact that some of the tricycles are self acquired while some are on hired purchase contract terms.

All these efforts are geared towards making the economy of Akwa Ibom State mobile and vibrant. However, as the maxim "little things matters" goes, government should not in any way feel contented in the fact that it has assisted in this direction, hence, relax and careless about what few other elements of the affected motorcycle ban could do to the detriment of other members of society. As it is revealed in this study, since the enforcement of the ban, there has been increase incidence of crime, unemployment as well as insecurity across the State. This insinuates that the recent ban has exerted some negative influences

on the economy of Akwa Ibom State and that there are some aggrieved parties who are neither satisfied with what they have nor appreciate development. Akwa Ibom State government therefore is faced squarely with the challenge of streamlining actions that will checkmate excesses within the transportation industry in the State as well as develop sensitive and sophisticated internal control mechanism that will not only control but also lubricate government plans and programmes towards success for the overall benefit of the populace.

Government should ensure that the operators are properly sensitized on the use of the tricycle through public enlightenment programmes and campaigns. They should also consider increasing the subsidy of the product to encourage interested members of the public to procure. Similarly, others who can afford the tricycle for others on hired purchase contract should not over value the cost of the machine but see their gesture as a means of helping the government in shaping the economy of Akwa Ibom State in particular and Nigeria in general. Government should also establish skill acquisition centres where people can be trained on various trades and ensure the empowerment of the graduates to kick start small businesses of their own so as to be able to carter for themselves and families.

Also government should create more job opportunities as most of the affected parties of the recent ban are graduates of diverse areas of specialization. Floating a loan scheme to interested members of the youths who have a good business proposal should equally be seen as the right step in the right direction towards reducing unemployment and over dependency on white collar jobs. Effective communication and dialogue is much better than the application of force in an attempt to address issues facing the teeming population of youths in Akwa Ibom State in particular and Nigeria in general. Finally, every member of Akwa Ibom both indigenes and non-indigenes should imbibe the culture of attitudinal change. All in the State should see the reshaping of their mindsets to focus on transforming the economy of Akwa Ibom State for the better as a primary project.

## REFERENCES

- Atubi, A. O.** (2006). *The effectiveness of para-transit transport services in Nigerian towns: the case of motorcycle transport in Abraka*. Akinbode, A. A. and Ughemeh, B. BA. (Eds) in Abraka Region. An occasional publication series of the Department of Geography and Regional Planning, Delta State University, Abraka, pp 118-131
- Ebimomi, V.** (2007). Combating Okada-aided crimes through rider's card. *Daily-independent*, Oct. 16, page 5
- Mabogunje, A. L.** (1986). *Development process: A spatial perspective*. London: Hutchison & Co. (Publishing) Ltd.
- Wikipedia** (2007). Okada (Commercial Motorcycle) in Nigeria
- Udoka, S. T.** (2010). The Global Economic Crisis: A challenge to curriculum implementation in Technical and Vocational Education Technology in Nigeria. *Journal of Research in Education and Society: International Perspective*, 1(2&3), December 2010.
- [http://www.demonscycle.com/Shop/Control/fp/user/demons/view\\_page/Invention](http://www.demonscycle.com/Shop/Control/fp/user/demons/view_page/Invention)**. Invention of the Motorcycle. Assessed on 15/6/2011.