

## The Challenges of Entrepreneurship in the Road Transport Industry: A Study of Crime along Minna –Kontagora Transport Sector

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### Abstract

Humans conduct their activities over space and this includes movement from one geographical point to another. The movement is oftentimes serviced by the road transport industry made up of both public and private entrepreneurs. To protect consumers in this sector, various policies and programmes have been put in place to ensure security and safety of users and operator alike. This however, has not yielded the desired results as criminal activities seemed to have shifted from neighbourhoods to highways. This paper is an attempt to understanding crime within Minna-Kontagora transport sector and its attendant fear among commuters and the implication of such fears on the entrepreneurship in road transport industry. The findings from an in depth interview with stakeholders, indicate that upsurge of criminal activities has affected smooth running of transport business along the corridor. A proper security arrangement for road users from the departure to the arrival points along the sector, is suggested.

### Introduction

Crime is an issue that is common of social life in all types of society. It however, varies in rates, prevalence across societies over time and space. Given the varied nature of crime, societies have devoted vast amount of human and material resources to its prevention and control. This is because crime threatens peace, development and security in society (Okunola, 2009). Over the years, fear of crime has increasingly become the beginning of wisdom for many residents in Nigeria and failure to address the phenomenon, deepened by frequent cases of robbery, murder, kidnapping, piracy and in recent time terrorism by Boko Haram has generated public outcry (Ayoyo, 2014, Usman, 2011).

Fear is a subjective variable and, according to Ditton, Bannister & Farrall (1999:83), it encompasses a confusing variety of feelings, perspectives and risk-estimation and means different things to different people. La Grange and Ferraro (1989) identified concrete and formless fear. Concrete fear refers to imminent danger while formless or abstract fear is more widespread, arising, for example, from reported crime through media or victimization surveys. Fear implies a state of anxiety or worry and, according to Maguire (1997), fear can become a 'Self-fulfilling Prophecy' through heightened public awareness of crime (Ayoyo, 2014).

Apart from media reports which have fuelled basic fear and mass hysteria, scholars have devoted considerable attention to its analysis (Okunola, 2009). For instance, Newton(2007), Argued that journeys began from the position of motor park and if any part of the journey is perceived as unsafe then the whole journey may be replaced or a decision might be made not to travel Thus shelter damage may reduce passenger travel and increase feelings of insecurity.

He then suggested that reducing fear of crime and disorder on public transport journeys could increase patronage by 3% at peak and 10% at off peak times.

Jackson (2006) argues that the modern idea of fear of crime is the manifestation of public attitudes and responses to crime. Public concerns about crime are indicated by territorial markings such as fences, no trespassing signs and external surveillance devices (Amzat et al.,

2007). Also, environmental criminologist opine that crime can be 'designed out', stressing that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, and an improvement in the quality of life (Cozens, 2008).

It is observed from the literature that emphasis is placed on neighbourhood types of crime negating those on the highways alongside their devastating consequences. The growing media reports indicate that both the poor and the rich are all victims of crime on the highways and for that reason it become an issue that affects virtually all facet of human society, the solution of which is not yet in sight. This paper is an attempt to contribute to crime analysis on Nigerian highways and it's damning repercussions on entrepreneurship in transport sector.

### **Objectives**

The broad objective of this study is to gain commuters' viewpoint on the implications of fear of highway crime on transport business along Minna-Kontagora transport sector. This gives us the impetus to setting the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the nature and trend of highway crime on Nigeria roads.
2. To investigate fear of crime among commuters
3. To assess the effects of highway crime on road transport business
4. To suggest ways of curbing highway crime in Nigeria.

### **History of Highway Crime in Nigeria**

Highway crime is a phenomenon that is not peculiar to modern times. Okunola, (2009) reported that road banditry especially robbery dates back in Nigeria as early as 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He cited Akinwumi (2001) as having reported that armed banditry was as widespread on trade route in pre-colonial Africa and often with the active support of some of the top political elites. Most of these trade routes brought enormous wealth but were also infected with armed robbers. In the pre-colonial Borgu, robbers usually operate in gangs under the leadership of a powerful prince who provided weapons and also directed the operations (Okunola, 2009).

Highway robbery however, became common shortly after the civil war due largely to the proliferations of weapons and the level of violence to which people were exposed to, owing to the proliferation of Small Arm and Light Weapon (SALW) in the country,( Usman 2004, Alemika, 2003, Okunola, 2009). Since then, the problem of armed robbery and other violent crimes continue unabated sending fear to the residents of the country.

### **Fear of Crime**

The concept of fear of crime is nebulous. It is often viewed as the fear of being a victim of crime rather than the actual probability of being a victim of crime. Vanderveen (2006:4) cited two contrasting definitions. The first, provided by Conklin (1971) defines fear of crime as the sense of personal insecurity in the community. A subsequent proposal from Covington and Taylor (1991) suggests fear of crime is the emotional response to possible violent crime and physical harm, whilst Ferraro and LaGrange (1992, cited in Ferraro, 1995:4) opine that fear of crime is an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associates with crime. This study provides rational and coherent account of fear of crime on the basis of some human socio-demographic characteristics.

While hearing about crime causes fear, those who experience it are even more likely to be fearful and change their behaviours. Victims of violent crime are the most deeply affected, fearing a repeat of their attack. Many go through a fundamental life change, viewing the world more suspiciously and as a less safe, controllable, and meaningful place

Looking at the matter from the psychological angle, Quarantelli (1985) cited in Sprang (2006)

revealed two seemingly opposing views regarding the mental-health consequences of cataclysmic events. The first view holds that acts of violence have differential rather than across-the-board effects on those exposed to them. Different perspectives, life experiences and personality characteristics might cause one individual to view the act as traumatic and develop significant distress, whereas another individual might have little or no reaction to the event. The second view holds that terroristic acts are 'traumatic' life events, yielding 'very pervasive, deeply internalized, and essentially negative psychological effects' (p. 191). The fear of crime in all its ramifications has affected people various ways, from social to political to psychological including economic. It is imperative at this point to look at the nature of crime on Nigeria highways. This brings us to the next section of our paper.

### Crime on Nigeria Highways

Crime on Nigeria highways is of different types and forms, however, the dominant of them is armed robbery and of late terrorist attacks, however, the two most feared crimes (robbery and murder) were not identified as crimes that occurred fairly frequently. This is because official crime statistics in Nigeria is not reliable: As official statistics are presented only when their presentation is politically expedient, (Usman, 2011), In any case, neither police figures nor victimization surveys are satisfactory. Yet few Nigerian journalists and researchers attempt to challenge official crime statistics, For instance, a report from *The Statesman* newspaper in 2006 graphically explained the nature of a particular crime on Nigeria highway in the following way:

*An east-bound luxurious bus was diverted into the bush somewhere between Abuja and Lokoja late in the night, where the passengers were subjected to unspeakable torture. Their valuables were stolen, the females, raped and, to complete the round of brutality, they were all stripped naked and ordered to run into the darkness while the vehicle was driven away with their clothing (The Statesman, 2006)*

These attacks usually occurred at some dark places like Tegna- Birnin Gwari road, Okene in Kogi State, Owo road in Ondo State as well as Minna – Kontagora road in Niger State. Sometime in January this year a lecturer with Niger State Polytechnic was killed by armed robbers between Zungeru- Tegna axis of the Minna- Kontagora road. This is just one out of several other attacks along this road which has cost loss of lives and property. Robert Rotberg, for instance, argued that since 1999 in Nigeria, "crime against persons, including murder, rape and robbery, has grown in scale and viciousness"

One of the definitive references in this area (Smith and Cornish 2006) identifies six categories of crime that are typically evident on the public transport network, these being antisocial behaviour; crimes against passengers including theft, robbery, and assault; crimes against employees including assault and robbery; vandalism and graffiti; and line of route crimes which are offenses along routes that cause delay or affect safety (Newton, 2012). Since Newton suggested that it is extremely useful to distinguish "en route" offenses from those at stations and stops (Newton, 2004), this paper will place premium on crime en route.

There are a number of reasons why understanding and preventing crime on public transport or highways should be of interest. Firstly, public transport has an important role to play in reducing social exclusion, by providing access to facilities such as work, health, leisure, and employment (Newton, 2012). Nigeria is a paradox: so peaceful but yet at war, so wealthy but poverty reigns among the majority of its citizens, so endowed but yet so deprived. Counting the cost. Ever since the activities of the militant group Boko Haram, 'BH' assumed horrendous dimension, the loss of properties with commercial value and forfeited local and foreign investment have been a song of *nunc dimittis* for the domestic economy. Some experts believe there are no criteria to quantify the loss to the economy (King, 2013).

Just toward the close of last August Australian Government warned her citizens against travel to Nigeria because "of high threat of terror, kidnapping, the unpredictable security situation, the possibility of violent civil unrest and the high level of violent crime (armed robbery)". Many reasons have been advanced for the upsurge of crime in Nigeria, while scholars like Okunola 2009 adduced infiltration of foreign bandits through porous borders, Usman, 2011, implicated poverty, unemployment and gansterism among youths, just as the former president of Nigeria, Obasanjo believes security agents, particularly the Police as culpable. A significant proportion of offenders involved in the criminal justice system have a history of substance use (Usman, 2011).

### Methods

A qualitative method of data collection was applied, thus an in-depth interview was conducted on 41 persons which consist of 15 passengers, 13 NURTW officials, 15 entrepreneurs/ vehicle owners and 8 police officers. Interview method was chosen because of dearth of time and easy accessibility high advantage of control of the interviewee's situation. Data generated were analysed using coding and the use of verbatim quotations from the views of respondents. Alongside simple percentage of consensus views on critical issues was also used

### Theoretical Framework

According to Brantingham and Brantingham (1991a: 2), 'environmental criminology argues that criminal events must be understood as confluences of offenders, victims or criminal targets, and laws in specific settings at particular times and places'. Against this background we are going to look at fear of crime its implications on transport industry using the Routine Activities. Theory as developed by Cohen and Felson (1979) and later elaborated by Newton (2005). The central argument of the theory is that the probability that a violation will occur at any specific time and place might be taken as a function of the convergence of the likely offenders and suitable target in the absence of capable guardians (Okunola, 2009:105).

This theory is based on the rational choice theory where the bandits make rational decision on a specific target and time, so long it will be advantageous for them. With little disadvantage as possible, (Okunola, 2009).

The theory proposes that for fear to occur, you need three elements; motivated offender, suitable target, and lack of capable guardian (Okunola, 2009:105). Removal of any of the elements crime will not occur. A motivated offender is a person who is motivated enough to commit crime, while suitable target is a person or object which can be attacked with ease without being arrested. The capable guardian are everyday people as they go about the routine activities as they prevent crime directly or indirectly. This capable guardian can be the police in patrol, even though those that are in patrol and extort money from motorists cannot qualify to be capable guardian.

### Findings and Discussions

The interview sessions with respondents which centres on the security and safety situations of the sector for the past 2 years, along Minna – Kontagora Road transport sector. Over 90% of the respondents agree on the rising crime along this sector. On the hierarchy of problems along the sector, crime, particularly robbery came top. A driver respondent said:

*"What worries us most these days is the fear of attack along the road. We don't even know which time of the day is safe, armed robbers do attack people any time at will, be it morning, afternoon or night."*

Another driver who ply this sector from Minna to Sokoto every time aptly said:

*"The fear or robbery attack has over taken bad roads now. For bad road you have alternative, but robbery attack has not, like now we abandon Yauri road because of bad road for Birnin Gwari road for Birnin Gwari road. The switch has not changed anything as far as robbery attack is concern"*.

Respondents were unanimously on the disturbing trend of the situation and the growing sophistication of the bandits operations. A commuter revealed that.

*One day I was returning from Minna in the night, on my way to Kontagora when I met a road block shortly after Zungeru bridge before Yakila village, with three men in military uniform washing their torchlight for me to stop. I made up my mind not to, but the three of them have covered the only opening left for motorist to pass. I accelerated and headed towards them, before the road clear, the car took one of them, broke the wheel screen in the process. I met the police some kilometres away. Before they return to the scene, the thieves had returned to take the corpse of their dead partner. On sighting police vehicle they ran into the bush abandoning their dead partner on the road, the police finally took the corpse away"*

A female respondent expressed her fear and the nature of crime along this corridor when she said. *The nature of dressing made by these bandits is of much concern to me. Imagine an armed robbery gang dressing in either army or police uniform, with sophisticated weapons. What do you do?"*

### **Effects of Crime on Entrepreneurs in Transport Business**

Crime itself is retrogressive, especially if it is the violent type. Where crime is prevalence, such Society hardly experience peace, not to speak of development. Data gathered from the Entrepreneurs within the transport business, views centres on the fact that crime situation Poses greater danger to their business and livelihood. For instance, a bus driver who doubles as owner lamented the situation in the following words:

*"I spent over 30 years driving commercial vehicles for people, the present situation I have not seen before. If it is not because I know that crime problem has affected passengers, I will always be in conflict with my drivers. Transport business is no longer lucrative these days".*

Respondents at Tegin axis of the road were unanimously in implicating fear of crime and bad road as issues affecting transport business.

*"We are just in business because we don't have potent alternative. Crime, corruption in form of extortion by police and other government officials, alongside poor roads, all culminate to wane our business down."*

Along the transport sector, there are three (3) major markets. That is Beji. Zungeru and Mariga markets. The Beji and Zungeru markets open on Wednesdays and Sundays while that of Mariga take place on Saturdays. Respondents expressed concerns on the rate of crime on these days. One driver at Zungeru axis of the corridor was specific:

*"Aside from robbery, we face other challenges on these market days, include those of security men, the VIO, the police and Road Safety people. All of them make these market days their harvest days of sort. How can we move forward with all these people on the way extorting money?"* He asked rhetorically.

### **Stakeholders' Response to Crime**

Since crime has pose serious challenge to the peace and development of the state, those directly affected are not sitting aloof, instead efforts were taken to minimise the effects of crime. The following measures are taken by the stakeholders:

Intensive patrol of Police and Soldiers of hot spots on the corridor

Formation and utilization of vigilante groups that also monitor the sector

Reduction in trips by passengers

Documenting details of passengers at point of departure in order to know the passengers are.

Use of alternative routes by drivers

On the efforts made by stakeholders, a taxi operator in Kontagora axis of the sector said: "since

we do not have confidence on the police and the epileptic road patrols, we have devise means of ensuring the safety of our passengers and other road users. This we do by employing vigilante groups in many villages along the sector to compliment whatever the police and other security outfits are doing within the corridor”.

The chairman Road Transport Union of Minna branch stressed that: “the little we are doing as business will not have been possible without the efforts of the vigilante group along our roads. Even here at this motor park we have them. We contribute money to keep them here.”

### Conclusion

It is obvious from the study that crime on the highway which are compounded by poor nature of our roads has affected users and vehicle owners in a great deal and they do not have confidence in the police. The absence of potent guardian on the road makes the place easy arena to operate by armed robbers. The alternative measures taken by stakeholders are also occasioned by the absence of this guardian as explained in the theoretical framework. It can therefore be concluded here that crime on the highway has send much fear to the people including entrepreneurs in the transport business. The effects cannot be easily quantified which is a minus to the economic and social development of the state in particular and the country in general.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the paper, the following suggestions are made:

Government should endeavour to repair all highways to reduce crime and fatalities as a result of accidents.

Effort should be intensify by stakeholders to discourage corruption among road users

The Police and other security agents should try to redeem their battered image in eyes of the people by eschewing corruption.

There should also be proper reward system for security agents

Entrepreneurs in transport sector should be encouraged with the provision of security at departed and arrival points and also designated places along the road. This measure will bring back confidence of passengers and improve patronage.

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