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# MOTORCYCLE (OKADA) TRANSPORT AS A VERITABLE MEANS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN BIDA, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*In Nigeria, problem of transportation remains complex because low level public transport services and increasing demand for transportation have remained. In this paper, the contribution, operating characteristics and problems of the motorcycle (otherwise called Okada) public transport service in respect of better movement of persons and goods in Bida, Niger State, Nigeria, are examined. Using random selection in the survey, a set of 300 and another 200 questionnaires were administered to selected motorcycle operators and the general public, respectively. From the findings, many advantages in favour of motorcycle transport such as better accessibility to destinations, door-to-door services, affordability, fuel efficiency, and maneuverability were recorded. Also, in the study, disadvantages of the Okada public movement services such as high accident rates, human abuse through stress and addictions, were traced. Though, the Okada public transportation service contributes for better transportation service, to attain excellent service delivery, certain regulatory measures and enforcements such as use of crash helmets are recommended.*

***Keywords: Transportation, Accessibility, Affordability, Crash Helmet, Regulation***

## INTRODUCTION

Transportation is used to shape cities, facilitates development and renewal as in Buhari (2000) using planning and construction. Public transportation is a major contributor to expansion and growth of urban centres and encourages agriculture in rural areas. Promotion of public transportation soon became a task and challenge for planners to assist policy makers towards urban planning and development projects, as detailed Filani (2003). Transportation is crucial to both economy and welfare, promotes social opportunities, as well as facilitator to positive multipliers effects such accessibility to markets, place of work, as well as encouraging additional investments. In some developing communities (Rodigue, 2011) transport is known with deficient capacity and low level reliability, resulting economic cost such as reduced or missed opportunities.

We have the challenge to make transport benefits in infrastructure development in line with introduced economic principles of the Nigerian Federal Government, so called National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy in NEEDS (2004). We also need the transport that will empower basic livelihood through transport investment in Nigeria and to support and contribute to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that is presently low. Requirements such as this are expected from various types of transport especially those to ensure public satisfaction. Motorcycle public transport is viewed in this paper as a contributing mode of motorized transportation for an excellent Public Transport System (PTS).

The study of Motorcycle Public Transport System (MPTS) is therefore aimed at achieving certain other benefits for Bida and other similar communities. These include: that it shall be used as tool to generate economic benefits to all stakeholders; that can serve as means to accentuate household purchasing power; and that is an avenue to reduce congestion costs and primary values in developing communities. These benefits are in line with the need for enhanced interaction (Rodigue, 2011), impregnate Nigeria Public Transportation (NPT), so as to address economic stagnation such as decline caused (Oni, 2004) in Gross Domestic Products (GDP) between 1996 at 6 percent to 2.84 percent in 1997, it is agreed to ameliorate the sustainable and complex urban transportation due to low public transport services and demand for immediate use of the PTS as detailed in Udo (1986).

In recent times the inadequate provision of transport infrastructure and services that relates to rural, urban and metropolitan poverty across Nigeria and explained in Olomola (2003) need to be reduced to lowest level

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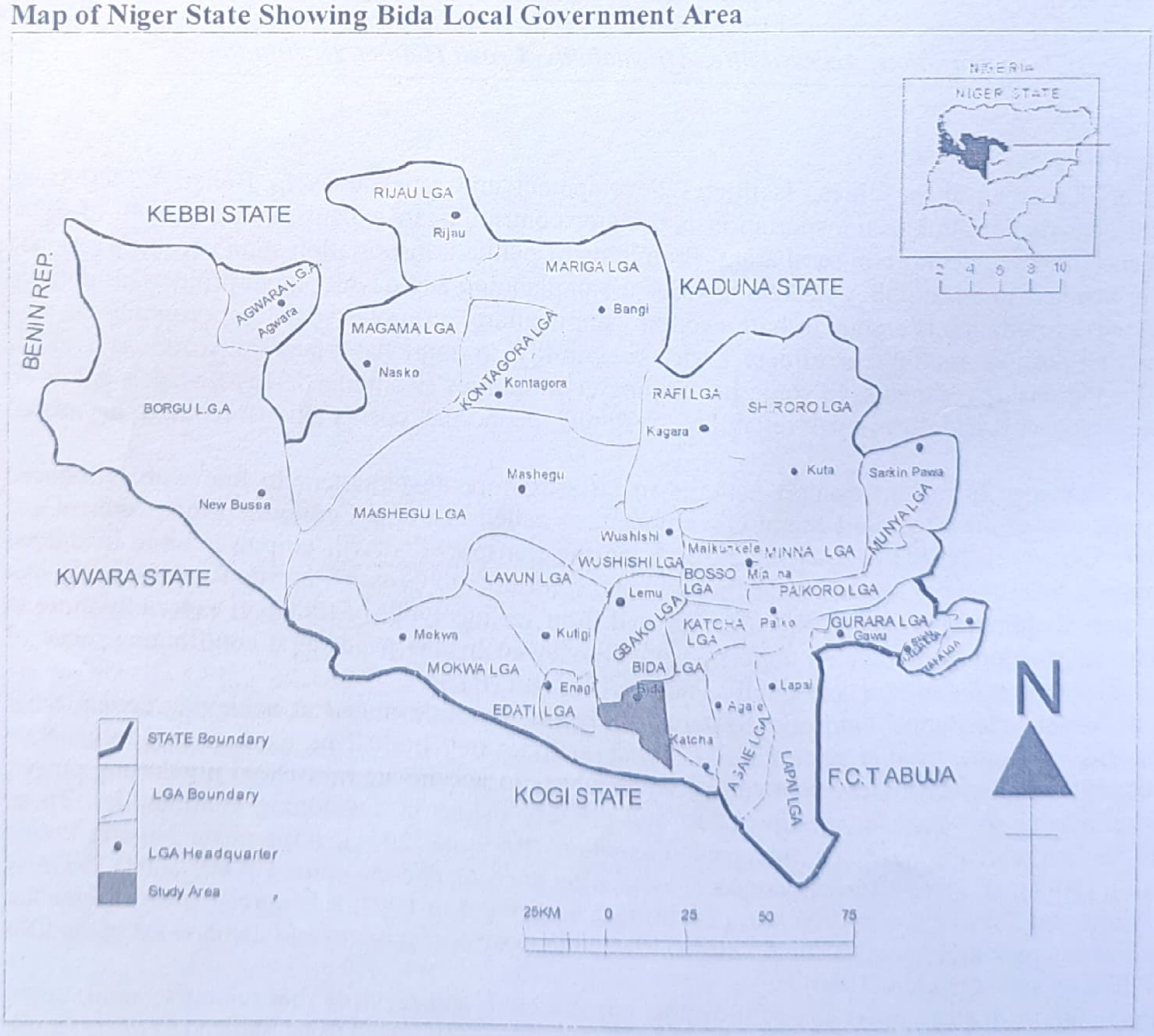
through study such as this. In such study therefore, examination is made of infrastructure such as condition of roads, condition of petroleum products particularly, fuel, traffic scenarios, passengers capacity and freight movement habits. Thus the need for urgent study as this and consequential policy measures to address the prevailing travel and transport problems.

## THE STUDY AREA

Bida Local Government Area of Niger State located between latitude $8^0$ and $11^0$ North and between longitude $4^0.30'$ and $7^0.00$ East and a population of 188,181 persons at the 2006 census (2006 census Gazets). It is also located on the Nupe sandstone formation, which consist of plains with ironstone capped hills or mesas. The senery is fairly uniform since lithology and dock structure are not greatly variable. An important feature of the scenery is the existence of large areas of fadama. The northern edge of the town consists of a broken – off Plateau. The town is drained by Chiken and Musa rivers, with Landzun which flows right across the heart of the town. The importance of these rivers is that they provide good irrigation opportunities for the inhabitants. Thus they are of both economic and social importance.( Abubakar 2003).

Being an ancient town one could still see the remnant of its former glory (City wall) here and there embracing the wide expanse of Bida.This ancient city wall estimated to measure more than 19 kilometers in circumference. Before it was demolished this wall had ten gates.Bida a traditional once walled city, is situated on a gentle slope of the river landzun which runs through its heart in a given swath of fadama.( Abubakar 2003). Bida has a mean annual rainfall of 1227mm with the highest mean monthly rainfall in September with 248mm. The rainy season starts on average between the 5th and 15th April and last just over 200 days. The mean monthly temperature is highest in March at 31 and lowest in August. (Abubakar 2003).

**Map of Niger State Showing Bida Local Government Area**




Source:Niger State Ministry of Land and Survey

## METHODOLOGY

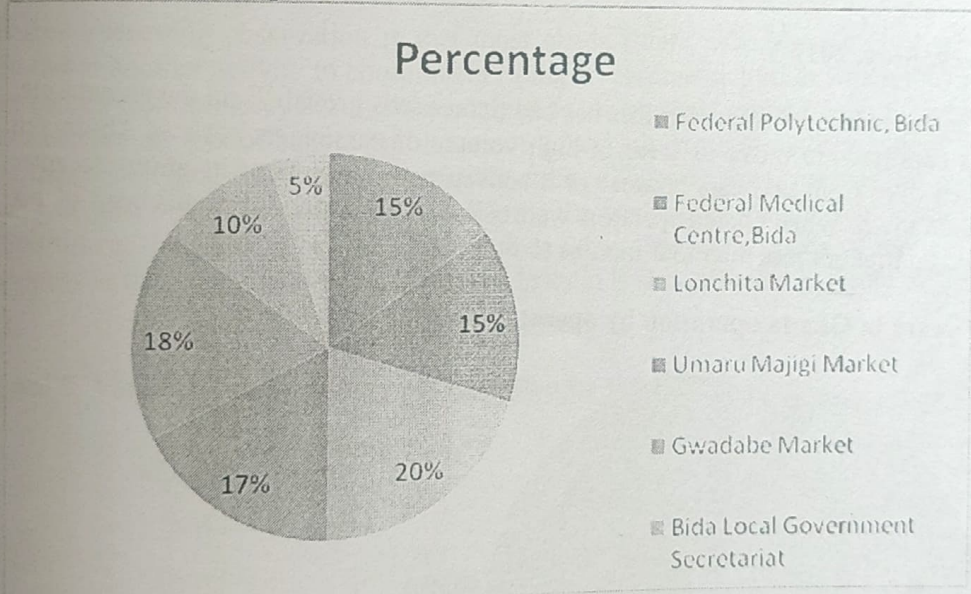
This paper examines the role of Okada rider in transporting people, goods and services in Bida metropolis. The data for the study was obtained through questionnaires, which were administered on registered and unregistered motorcycle operators, riders (passengers) and the general public. A total of 200 operators and 100 unregistered operators were interviewed at different locations in Bida. A total of 300 Okada operators were questioned (see Figure 1- 6 and |Table 1-). The questionnaires were administered to the Okada operators at seven major points along major streets in Bida. Also another set of 200 questionnaires was distributed to the general public in order to seek additional but required information. In general 500 questionnaires were administered and analyzed in this work. A random sampling method was adopted for selection of both location and respondents.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study was carried out on Sundays and Mondays so as to obtain needed information from Okada operators that operate on full-time basis and ply road from morning till nighttime. Also from those who ply roads after working hours, during weekends or during public holidays. Mondays are usually the best days when both public workers and private individuals would be found on the streets to attend to questionnaires. And Sundays are days that most people undertake private business and provide opportunity for interacting with different interest groups.

**Figure 1. Showing Okada (Motorcycle) zone/Area of operation and number of operators**

**Administered with questionnaires**

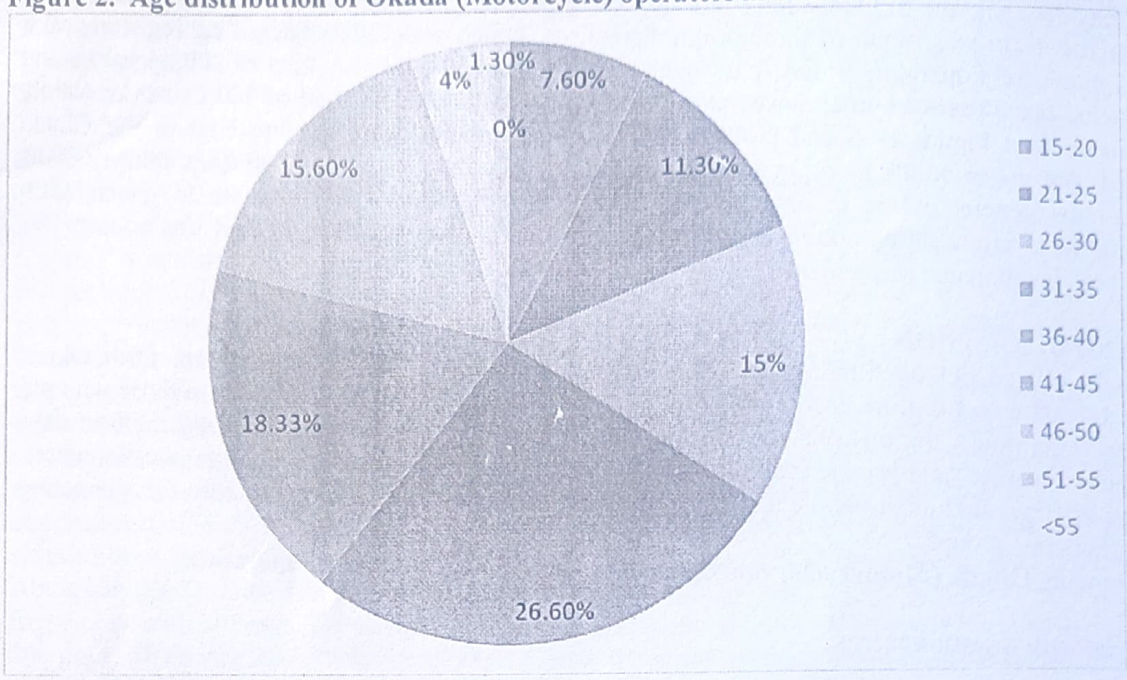



**Source: Author's fieldwork, May, 2012**

### Okada operation in Bida

Lonchita Market being the largest market with more number of motorcycle riders has the highest percentage of 20% of questionnaire distributed as shown on the above chart. Although Okada riding is strenuous, therefore requires commitment and sacrifice. In Bida Okada riding is mainly male affairs. Therefore all operators interview are male individuals. The differences are the age distribution.. Figure 2, shows the age distribution of the operators. The largest number of respondents, which fall between the age of 25 and 35 year, is an indication that only middle aged people are mostly involved in Okada operation in Bida.

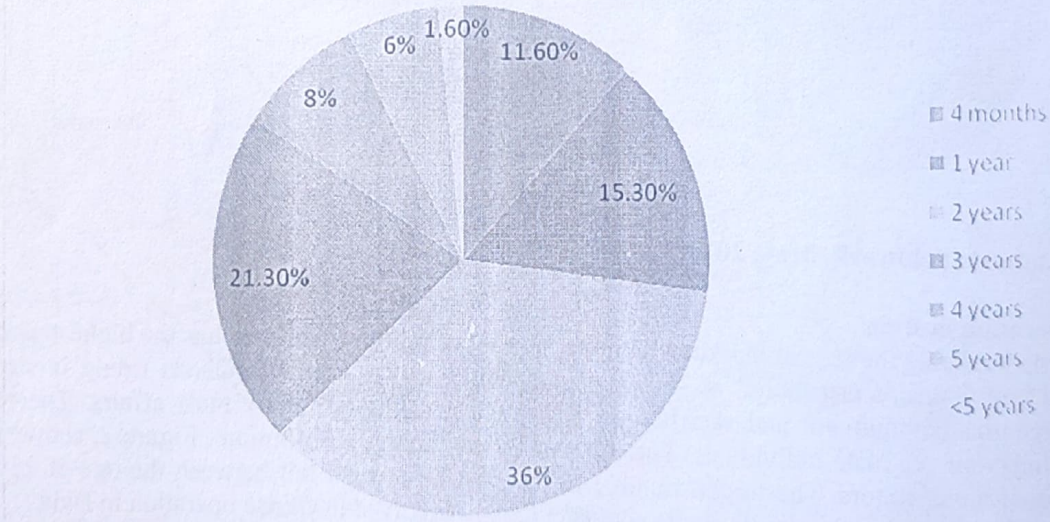
**Figure 2. Age distribution of Okada (Motorcycle) operators in Bida town.**




**Source: Authors field Survey, May, 2012**

The use of Okada (Motorcyle) for public transport services has had tremendous growth in the recent time, such that it resulted in taxis cars have to move to areas of high volume of passengers such as Abuja and Minna. The Okada have taken over from taxi cars because of it convenience in terms of its ability to enter every knock and corner of Bida town. When Okada operators were asked on how long they have been in this business, most of them answered that not less than four months to five years.

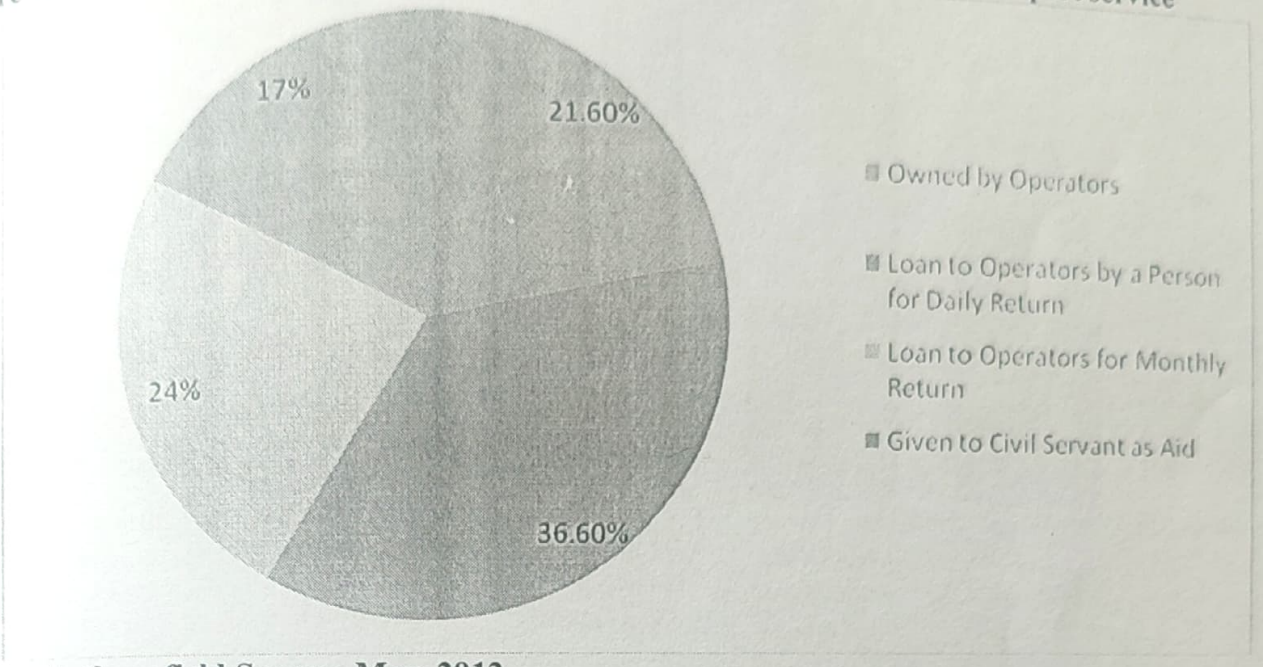
**Figure 3: Number of years in Okada operation by operators in Bida Metropolis**




**Source: Authors field Survey, May, 2012**

The Okada riders that ply most street in Bida metropolis on commercial basis looks interesting and worthy to discuss. The pattern in common is divided into 4. Most Okada (motorcycles) are owned by the riders. Others are given to rider for daily financial return, or loaned to rider for monthly financial return. While the last pattern is the ones government gives out to serve as aid to civil servants and some of them after closing from office, turn in to Okada operation.

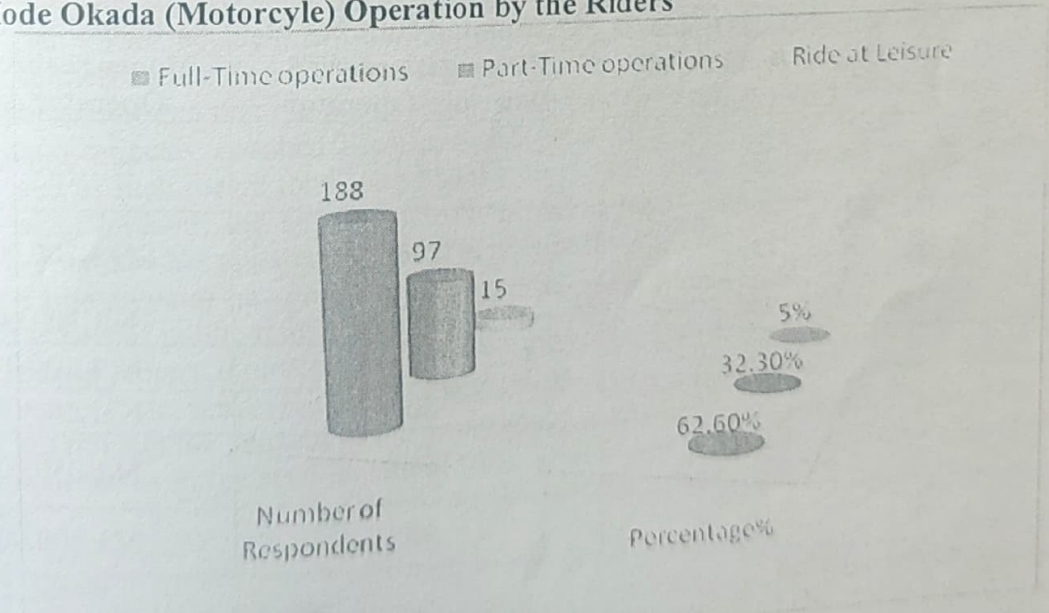
Figure 4: **Ownership pattern of Okada (Motorcycle) used for repayment transport service**




**Source: Authors field Survey, May, 2012**

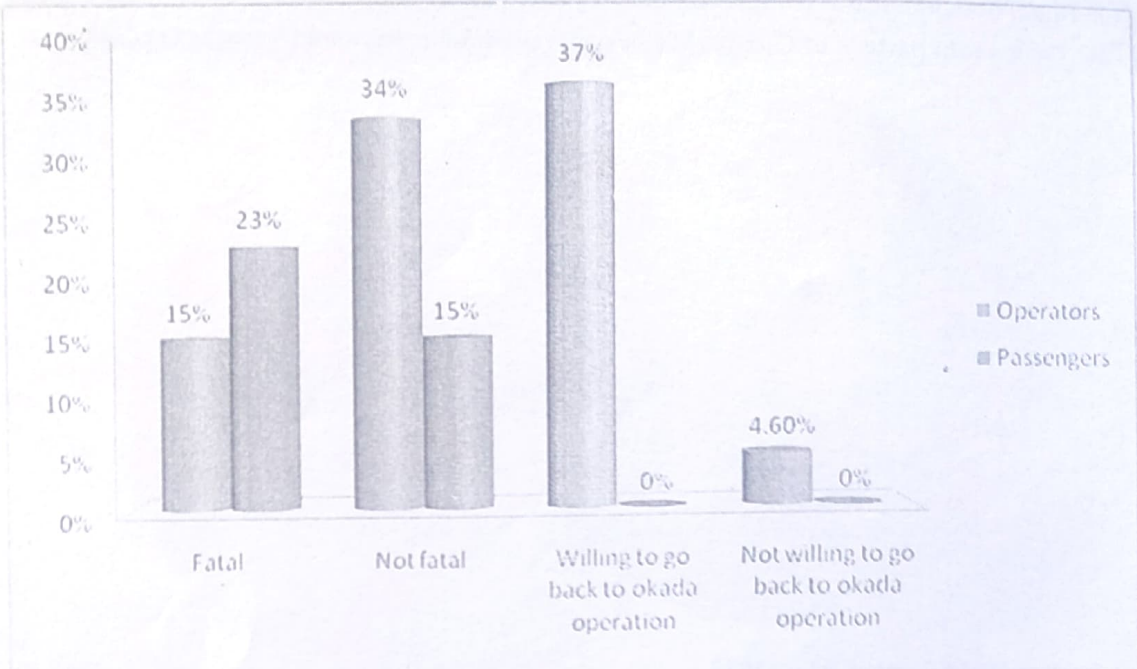
Another interesting observation is that most okada riders, who are not civil servants as above, are also engaged in another activity to compliment riding on commercial bikes which they run. In other words, what they earned from motorcycles business only supplement their earning from their basic trade. They are fresh graduate that are out of school and have not gotten job, fresh secondary school leavers, carpenters, Night Guards, bricklayers, and those that migrate from villages to town running away from farming. Therefore most categories of these riders are found doing the business of Okada (motocycle) for commercial services as full-timers, part-timers or just on the streets when they are in need of money. The breakdown of their responses to the questionnaires administered to them is shown below in figure 5.

**Figure 5: Mode Okada (Motorcyle) Operation by the Riders**




**Source: Authors field Survey, May, 2012.**

It is important to note that Okada (motorcycle) riding serve as business and source of employment to youths and not too old people in Bida metropolis. Some areas in the city were selected and questionnaires were administered to both operators and passengers (males and females) and when they were asked on whether Okada business be wiped out of the town to peri-urban or rural areas due to some reasons like frequent accidents, reckless riding and over speeding, the responses are shown in the table 6 below.
Okada operators that have involved in accident(s) and willing or not willing to engage in the business again.




**Source: Authors field Survey, 2012**

From the survey of Okada (Motorcycle) operators in Bida metropolis, the normal charges of the trip fare of less than a kilometer is ₦30.00 and the price increases with distance. But in an occasion that there is scarcity of fuel in the township, the price may be increased by 50% or more depending on the level of scarcity. Table 2 below shows the number of passengers that operators of Okada carry daily and the estimated amount of money they realize daily.

Estimated Number of Passengers carried by Okada (Operators) and Amount of money Realized per day in some zones of operation in Bida.

Table: 1

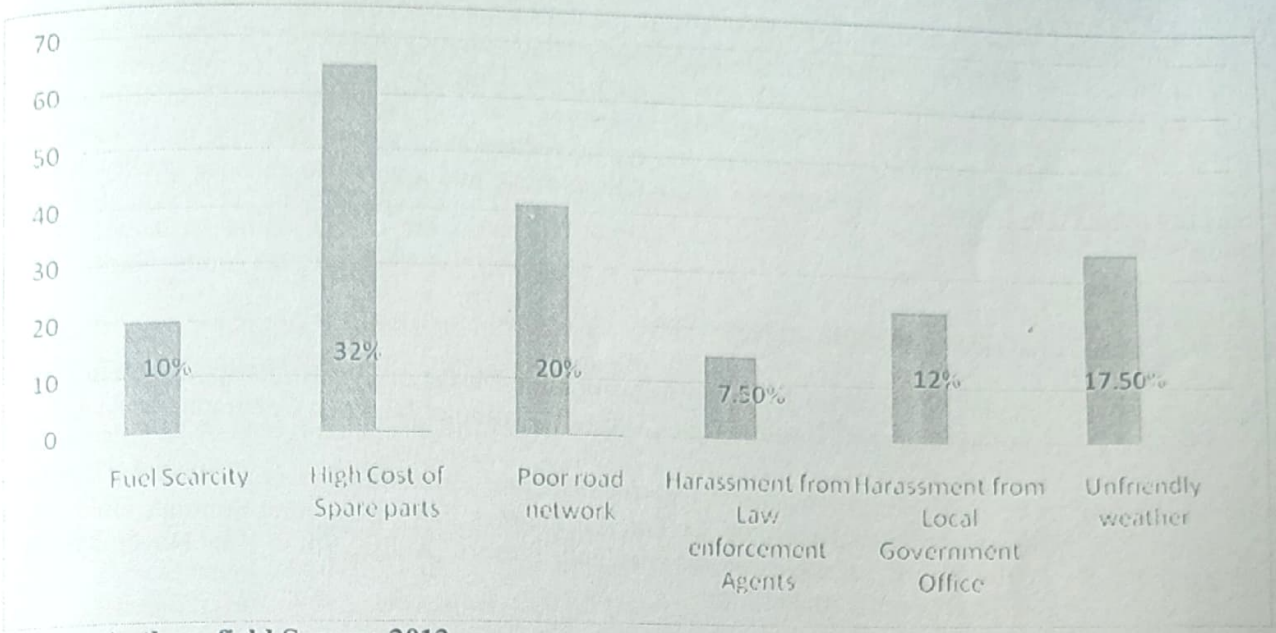
| Zones | Number of Okada (Operators) in each Unit (Zone) | Estimated Number of Passengers carried Daily per Operator | Estimated Amount of Money realized per Operator daily |
|---|---|---|---|
| Federal Polytechnic, Bida | 60 | 120 | N 1,700.00 |
| Federal Medical Center, Bida | 55 | 105 | N 1,200.00 |
| Lonchita Market | 70 | 150 | N 1,300.00 |
| Bida L.G.A | 40 | 50 | N 1,100.00 |
| Gwadabe Market | 50 | 50 | N 1,300.00 |
| Government College gate | 32 | 65 | N 1,050.00 |
| Umaru Majigi Market | 45 | 90 | N 1,200.00 |

**Source: Authors field Survey,2012**

**Associated problems with Okada Commercial Transport**

Generally, whenever Okada (motorcycle) is being used for commercial transportation services all over Nigeria, a number of problems always militating against the system. In Bida Okada operators were asked to identify the problems confronting the effectiveness of their operation, majority of them pointed out that high cost of spare parts for their bikes is the major bane. Other problems mentioned include poor road network, harassment by local Government Office, Unfriendly weather especially during hamathan, etc.

**Figure 6: Problems confronting Okada (Motorcycle) operation in Bida metropolis.**




**Source: Authors field Survey, 2012**

**Generally the contribution of public transport cannot be over emphasized.**

As much can be attributed in favor of using Okada (motorcycle) to provide fare paying transportation services in Nigeria, the system however is without flaw. Some Okada rider takes to the street without the knowledge for obeying traffic rules and regulations that guide the use of road. While some are just too reckless, others careless for other road users especially in their operations in urban centers

They are found of overtaking from both side and they carry additional passenger instead of single one as allowed by regulation. Apart from this, many operators dodge authority and have less or no knowledge that guide the riding of motorbike.

This attitude of most Okada operators results in to quit a number of accidents which result in serious injuries and sometimes lost of lives. In order to avert this excessiveness and recklessness of cases of fatalities resulting from Okada accident in Bida metropolis, the Bida Local Government Authority enforce the use protective helmets and educate the general public on the importance of using helmet while on motor bike

It also important to note that the public attitude towards the use of Okada(motorcycles) for public transport business have seriously changed because some years back, to ride on bikes was looked down upon as belittling and as such meant for poor persons only. Egbu (1994) as cited by Ahmed (2007) confirmed this assertion when he said; the significant role in urban public transport which has been assumed by the motorcycle operators has apparently helped to change this attitude

The Okada (motorcycle) has provided employment opportunities to many youth and this has made it an acceptable means of public transport in most urban centers in Nigeria. Although the Chief servant of Niger state has tried to replace motorcycle with tricycle in order to reduce causalities been recorded as a result of the use of motorcycle, however his effort has not yielded hundred percent success. The tricycle brought by the Chief has not met the demand of the growing population especially that the gesture is yet to be extended to other major towns in the state including Bida. The major focus of the Chief servant has been Minna, the state capital.

## CONCLUSION

With increasing demand for public transport development in the country, motorcycle operators, popularly known as Okada have increased in their operation recent times to meet the need of the general public in terms of public transportation in most urban centers. This study examined Okada operation in Bida metropolis. The Okada riders have been providing useful service that is likely to expand and if appreciated, something needs to be done to improve or tackle the problem militating against its operation. Although one may be lying by saying that Okada operation in Bida is completely without any problem such as recklessness in driving, disobeying of traffic rules, and regulations and daily accidents, all these have disastrous consequences on both victims (operator and passenger).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The government therefore needs to take action to ensure the use of the protective helmet and intensify in the provision of tricycle so that with time they can replace motor bike with tricycle machines. Another important issue is that Okada operator need to be educated through their Union on road safety measures that are necessary to protect them and their passengers. The measures that will need their attention will include compliance with traffic rules and regulations on the roads, reduction in speed, carrying more them one passenger at a time. If all these are put in to use safety will improve and it will also enhance quality in their operation.

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