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The Thrust and Tug Nexus for Okada ‘Commercial motorcyclist’ Business among Youths in Ekiti and Ondo States, Nigeria: Implications for Youth Development

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*The work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approve the
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ABSTRACT

A proportionate number of Nigerian youths engaged in Okada riding coined (Okada) business ‘Commercial motorcyclist’. The business has drained manpower from the vocational sectors of the Nigerian economy. The study was carried out to assess the Thrust and Tug Nexus for Okada business among Youths and the implications for their future development. A total of 300 respondents were randomly selected from the list of registered Okada riders in 16 take off points from Ekiti and Ondo states while a structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from them. The findings of the study show that most of the Okada riders were young and married with

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moderate family sizes. They are mostly literate. The average years of engaging in Okada riding was 3.8 years. A good percentage (41%) was formerly employed. The study established a strong connection between the tug and thrust nexus to Okada business. The factors that pushed them to Okada business were the economic depression, unattractive vocational jobs, poverty, erratic power supply, retrenchments and unemployment and the lack of fund to start a job. The pull factors include an ability to get daily income from Okada, ease of entry the business, high returns from the business when compared to other jobs, ability to be famous and popular among peers and a quick money making venture. Okada business could have adverse effects on the future of the youth and wasn't considered as a vocation worth bequeathing to children. However, it has the tendency to sustain their family in the face of unemployment temporarily. The study recommends the invigoration of the economy of Nigeria; the provision of an enabling environment for the vocational sector to strive; capacity building of youths in the different vocations and the encouragement of the patronization of made in Nigeria goods.

Keywords: *Okada riding; poverty reduction; push and pull factors; social capital and youth empowerment.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of global poverty among the youth is of utmost concern. An estimate of 209 million youth is living on less than US\$ 1 a day [1]. Also, around 515 million young people are living on less than US\$ 2 a day. "Young people constitute half of the world's unemployed population and more than half of those living in poverty. About 44 of 66 countries did not consult with young people when preparing national poverty reduction strategies [2]. Young people aged between 15 and 24 are a quarter of the world's working population, but they make up half of its unemployed [3]. According to [4] report almost 75 million youth worldwide are looking for work.

The issue of poverty and unemployment among youth is worsening in Nigeria. Despite Nigeria's numerous agricultural resources and oil wealth, poverty is widespread in the country and has increased since the late 1990s. Nigeria's population is about 167 million people in 2012 (National Bureau of Statistics), half of which are youths [5]. Unemployment rate average was 5.30 percent in 2006 in Nigeria. It increased to 21.10 percent in 2010 and 23.90 percent in 2011 [6]. Youth unemployment is severe in rural than urban areas and it is prevalence among the female than the male gender in Nigeria [7]. The report shows that about 55.42 per cent of unemployed youth are female.

Several factors are adduced to the high rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria. Some of the factors are: High population growth rate, poor policy implementations, deficient school curricula, and limited vibrant industries. Others are poor infrastructural facilities, poor access to

information and communication technologies, lack of employment database in the formal and informal sectors, inefficient utilization of resources, corruption, military rules, etc [7-10].

In an attempt to reduce unemployment, the government and various stakeholders clamor for skilled entrepreneurial and the development of the vocational sector. The trained entrepreneurship includes mechanics, welders; auto rewire, and electrician, technicians, bricklayers, and carpentry, battery chargers and Agricultural enterprises. According to [11] and [12], the vocational sector is witnessing a catalogue of challenges, among which are: hostile working environment, double taxation, competitive market, and poor government policies implementation strategies. A good number of the population employed in the entrepreneurial sector has migrated to the Okada business [13]. The name Okada is one of the nicknames attached to the commercial motorcyclist in Nigeria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Commercial motorcyclist started in Nigeria as a result of the economic depression of the 1980s. Jobless youths embraced the use of Okada to generate money by patronizing narrow or poorly maintained roads [14]. The name Okada was derived from Okada Air, a Nigerian local airline, now defunct after the order of the Okada Airline – the most popular Nigerian local aviation services in the 1980s. The motorcycle transports were nicknamed after the airline because they could maneuver through heavy traffic to arrive at passenger's destination timely as the airline [14]. Okada is used in cities to overcome traffic

congestion, and penetrate interiors not accessible to automobiles and buses, a few examples in Plate 1. One of the main issues of concern is the high rate of accident and death among Okada riders. Reckless riding and overloading of passengers on Okada have always led to serious road accidents resulting in orthopedic and death casualties [15]. According to [16], the Traffic Management Authority records show that 6,131 out of the 13, 398 accidents recorded in Lagos State, Nigeria resulted from Okada accidents. In the same report, about 619 people were either killed or seriously injured between 2011 and 2012. Also, statistics revealed the death of 63 people and 59 others that sustained serious injuries from Okada accidents between January and October 2012 [16]. Also, [17] reported that about 80 percent of Okada accident victims at Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital (OAUTH) suffered from limb injuries. Apart from the safety issue, there is also a security challenge to the Okada panorama. [16] affirmed the involvement of the commercial motorcycles in most of the robbery cases in Lagos in 2012. The hazards warrant the imposition of bans on Okada riding in some state capitals in Nigeria.

Agriculture, according to [18] is an important sector of the economy with high potentials for employment generation, food security and poverty reduction. However, these possibilities have remained largely untapped. Most of the youth prefer Okada business to the work in agricultural sector. Okada services have pulled the able-bodied young people from agriculture, thus posing serious labour problems on the farm [19].

However, the Federal Government of Nigeria embarked on a project recently coined the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA). The vision in the transformation strategy is to achieve a hunger-free Nigeria through income growth, accelerates achievement of food and nutritional security, generates employment and transforms Nigeria into a leading player in global food markets to grow wealth for millions of farmers [18]. A component of ATA is the Youth Employment in Agricultural Program (YEAP), an initiative to cater for youth interested in agricultural business. The program targeted providing a job for about 750,000 young people in the agricultural sector [20]. The program has been adjudged successful in some states [21] and [22]. However, the rate of Okada driving has not decreased appreciably. The objectives of the

Millennium Development Goals will not be achievable without tackling youth poverty and unemployment, particularly extreme poverty and hunger, child mortality, and environmental sustainability. It is on this note that the study is embarked upon to investigate the drivers of Okada business among youth in Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims at:

- Ascertaining the socio economic characteristics of Okada riders
- Determining the pull and push factors from the vocational sector and the Okada business
- Determining the effects, of Okada riding on youth's future development



Plate 1. Examples of Okada riders and passengers in Nigeria

Source: [23] & <http://nigeriaeye.com>

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in four main cities of Ondo and Ekiti States of Nigeria. These are Akure, Ondo, Ado and Ikere Ekiti. The four cities were purposively chosen due to the prevalence

of Okada riders in the areas. The researcher located four take-off points of commercial Okada riders in each city, making 16 take-off points altogether. All the registered Okada riders at each take-off point form the sampling frame for the study. Twenty Okada riders were carefully chosen from each takeoff point by using a simple random sampling method. In a situation whereby the person selected either declined or not available, the next person in the list was selected as a replacement, thus making a total of 320 respondents. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Out of the 320 questionnaires administered, 300 were correctly filled and used for the study, while the researcher discarded the poorly filled ones. The data was analysed using frequency counts and percentages, Means as well as and Likert scale. The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents were measured using frequency counts and percentages, the push and pull factors from other vocations to Okada business was determined through a five-point Likert-type scale. A threshold mean of 3.0 was used to select those factors that were significant to push them to Okada riding. Factors whose mean were more than or equal to the threshold mean were accepted to have significant push to Okada riding. While the researcher rejects the factors with mean lower than three as having no significant push. The same measure was used to determine the effects of Okada riding on youth's future development.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio- economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 shows that majority (60.0%) of the respondents riding Okada were within the age range of 21-30 years. About 32.0 percent were within 31-40 years of age. The mean age of the respondents was 29.2 years. It shows that a colossal proportion of Okada riders is relatively young and still in their productive age. The statement is in line with the findings of [24] that most of the motorcycle riders in Nigeria are young. These set of people are expected to be the driving force of our nation's national development, but have not the privilege due to unemployment. "The world's young people, now numbering more than 1 billion, are major human resources for development, and can be key agents of innovation and positive social

change. Yet the scale of youth poverty robs the world of that potential [25].

About 45.0% of the respondents are not married; 36.0% were married, 12.0% were cohabiting, and 2.67% were divorced while 4.7% were widowed. The huge proportion of the unmarried respondents might result from inadequate resources to maintain a home, while the pursuit for survival could drive them to Okada business. Those cohabiting might have difficulty in financing a suitable accommodation, thus cohabitation. Above one-third (40%) of the respondents were living alone while more than half of them have less than four members living together as a household. One expects the low family sizes of the respondents because they are still in their productive age. In terms of educational attainment, only 5.3% did not have any form of education or the other. About 16.0% attempted secondary education, and 21.33% completed junior secondary education, 26.67% had senior secondary education while 28.0% had tertiary education. Over 75% of the Okada riders in the two states were literate. Though the level of education of some of them was low, however, they could have been able to perform well in other vocations or jobs other than Okada. More than one-fifth (22.7%) of the respondents had been riding Okada less than two years while 49.3% of the respondents had spent about 2-3 years. It shows that most of them have not actually spent so much time on riding Okada. This might be due to the danger incurred in the business as a personal interview with most of them indicated that they engaged in Okada as a temporary measure but desire to quit as soon as they are gainfully employed. About 41.0% of the respondents were employed in one vocation or the other before diverting to Okada business while 59.0 % were unemployed. Fig. 1 shows the former jobs done by the respondents. Majority (31.0%) of those that were formerly employed were from the private sector. Most of these people indicated that they were retrenched. Other occupations include tailoring, trading, mechanic, welding, electricians and food vendors with 24.0, 19.0, 10.0, 8.0, 5.0 and 3.0% respectively. It shows that apart from the unemployment situation in Nigeria, people drift from other vocations to Okada business. Over 50% of the respondents have one certificate or the other before drifting to Okada business.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by their socioeconomic characteristics

| Variable | Frequency(N=300) | Percentage |
|--|------------------|------------|
| Age | | |
| <20 | 3 | 1.0 |
| 20-30 | 180 | 60.0 |
| 31-40 | 95 | 31.7 |
| 41-50 | 22 | 7.3 |
| Marital status | | |
| Never married & not cohabiting | 134 | 44.67 |
| Currently married | 108 | 36.0 |
| Cohabiting | 36 | 12.0 |
| Divorced | 08 | 2.67 |
| Widowed | 14 | 4.67 |
| Household size | | |
| 1 | 120 | 40.0 |
| 2-3 | 93 | 31.0 |
| 4-6 | 77 | 25.7 |
| 7-9 | 10 | 3.3 |
| Highest level of education | | |
| No formal education | 17 | 5.7 |
| Completed Primary school | 08 | 2.7 |
| Attempted Junior secondary school | 49 | 16.3 |
| Completed junior secondary school | 64 | 21.3 |
| Completed Secondary school | 80 | 26.7 |
| Tertiary education | 82 | 27.3 |
| Years of engaging in Okada riding | | |
| < 2 years | 68 | 22.67 |
| 3-4years | 148 | 49.33 |
| 5-6 year | 46 | 15.33 |
| >6years | 36 | 12.0 |
| Employment status before riding Okada | 02 | 0.67 |
| Formerly employed | 123 | 41.0 |
| Not employed | 177 | 59.0 |

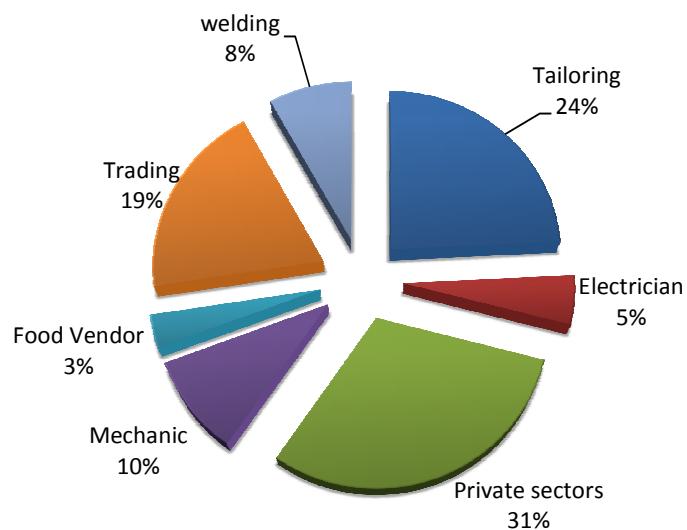


Fig. 1. Former occupation of Okada riders

4.2 The Push Factors from the Vocational Sector to Okada Business

The push factors are the forces that drive the youth away from the vocational sector as well as the problems encountered that warrants their choice of driving Okada. Result of the analysis in Table 2 show nine perceived factors that could push the youth to Okada riding. The following factors: low level of education and lack of marketable skills did not significantly push the youth to the riding of Okada in the study area. The finding contradicts the assertions of [7] that one of the factors that cause unemployment in Nigeria is failure of educational institutions to provide their students with appropriate skills to make them employable. However, economic depression ranked first as the most important factors that pushed the riding of Okada among the youths. This corroborates the assertion of [26] that many of the operators of Okada riding business took the advantage of the business to seek employment and income opportunities to mitigate the negative effects of the global economic downturn. At the second position were the unattractive vocational jobs, followed by poverty.

Erratic power supply occupied the fourth position; retrenchments and unemployment occupied the fifth and sixth positions while lack of fund to start a vocation occupied the last position. Most of the vocations in Nigeria look unattractive to the youth due to the prevalent challenges. [27] Enumerated the barriers to taking up agriculture as a lifetime profession among youths. It includes fear of crop failure; financial problems; land availability; seasonality of agricultural produce/market access; unpredictable future and the psychological effects of being called a farmer.

It is worth noting that erratic power supply was also a significant factor that pushes most youths to Okada business. Erratic power supply has crippled most trades in Nigeria. It increases the cost of production and at times could lead to inefficiency. It corroborates the findings of [28] and [11] that the power outage is a major challenge to the use of internet resources and vocational trades in Nigeria. One of the outcomes of economic depression is retrenchment. Most private firms in Nigeria embarked on the retrenchment of their workforce. Some of the retrenched workers find succour in Okada business.

4.3 The Pull Factors to Okada Riding

The pull factors could be referred to as the attractions to Okada business. The push is, usually, remedied by a corresponding pull. Seven perceived variables were listed as pull factors to Okada business. They were also subjected to a Likert scale. Going by the result of the analysis in Table 3, two variables – ability to gain experience and Self-actualization did not significantly pull the youth to Okada business. The implication is that youths did not get involve in Okada business to gain any experience or to fulfill their life dreams. However, five of the variables were found to be significant in pulling the youths to Okada riding. These are the ability to get daily income from Okada, ease of entry, high returns rate when compared to other jobs, ability to be famous and popular among peers and a quick money making venture.

The significant of most of these factors might reflect from the quest to meet the basic needs of life. It is in line with Maslow's hierarchical theory of needs as quoted by [29]. The theory stipulated that the first and most significant motives that drive human behaviour are the biological and physiological needs. The need for air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex and sleep are the most germane to human existence. The pursuit for other needs such as safety, belongingness, and love, self-esteem, cognitive, aesthetics and self-actualization only comes after fulfilling the basic needs.

The ease of entering into Okada business is expected to be significant as the ability to ride a motorcycle is a major determinant factor. It is unlike other works such as tailoring that requires being an apprenticeship under a skilled individual and possibly graduate on the job and purchase equipment to start-up business. It shows the significance of a lack of start-up capital as a pushing force to Okada business.

4.4 Effects of Okada riding on Youth's future Development

The respondents were made to respond to the probable effects of riding Okada on their future. These effects could either be positive or negative. Five of the eleven perceived variables listed were found to be significant (Table 4). While rating the variables according to the magnitude of significance, untimely death was rated first by the respondents and was followed

by health challenges. Ability to have accident and deformation occupied the third and fourth positions while ability to sustain family occupied the fifth position. The implication of this is that even though the youths know that Okada riding could lead to untimely death, health challenges, accident and deformation, they believe it could sustain their family.

This is also supported by Maslow's theory of motivation as reiterated earlier. Factors that were not significant include: purchase car(s), build a house (s), Okada business is not sustainable, ability to bequeath to children and ability to engage in it for 30years. These are some of the reasons why people engaged in one occupation or the other. The implication of this is that most of the youth sees Okada as a temporary business

Table 2. The Push Factors to Okada riding

| Push factors | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Cumulative | Mean | Rank |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------|------|-----------------|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD | | | |
| Unemployment, | 460 | 248 | 402 | 0 | 12 | 1122 | 3.74 | 6 th |
| Poverty | 600 | 200 | 390 | 0 | 0 | 1190 | 3.96 | 3 rd |
| Low educational standard | 160 | 104 | 264 | 216 | 2 | 746 | 2.49 | 8 th |
| lack of marketable skill, | 0 | 416 | 12 | 60 | 164 | 652 | 2.17 | 9 th |
| Erratic power supply, | 590 | 72 | 492 | 16 | 0 | 1170 | 3.90 | 4 th |
| Economic depression | 830 | 528 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1362 | 4.54 | 1 st |
| Unattractive vocational jobs | 585 | 520 | 30 | 42 | 22 | 1199 | 3.97 | 2 nd |
| Lack of fund to start a vocation | 60 | 496 | 492 | 0 | 0 | 1048 | 3.49 | 7 th |
| Retrenchment | 500 | 480 | 70 | 90 | 0 | 1140 | 3.8 | 5 th |

Table 3. The pull factors to Okada riding

| Pull factors | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Cumulative | Mean | Rank |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|------------|------|-----------------|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD | | | |
| Quick money making venture | 100 | 680 | 200 | 10 | 0 | 990 | 3.3 | 5 th |
| Ease of entry into Okada business | 725 | 320 | 150 | 50 | 0 | 1245 | 4.15 | 2 nd |
| High returns from Okada business | 740 | 240 | 171 | 70 | 0 | 1221 | 4.07 | 3 rd |
| Fame and popularity | 500 | 312 | 45 | 92 | 61 | 1010 | 3.37 | 4 th |
| Experience | 160 | 16 | 12 | 360 | 76 | 612 | 2.04 | 6 th |
| Self-actualization | 40 | 32 | 54 | 400 | 66 | 592 | 1.48 | 7 th |
| Urge for daily income | 890 | 184 | 198 | 20 | 0 | 1292 | 4.31 | 1 st |

Table 4. Effects of Okada riding on youth's future development

| Variable | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Cumulative | Mean | Rank |
|------------------------------------|------|-----|----|-----|-----|------------|------|------------------|
| | SA | A | U | D | SD | | | |
| Health Challenges | 930 | 456 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1386 | 4.62 | 2 nd |
| Accidents | 990 | 336 | 54 | 0 | 0 | 1380 | 4.60 | 3 rd |
| Untimely death | 1070 | 344 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1414 | 4.71 | 1 st |
| Deformation | 940 | 416 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 1372 | 4.57 | 4 th |
| Purchase car(s) | 160 | 148 | 36 | 316 | 61 | 721 | 2.40 | 8 th |
| Family sustenance | 760 | 456 | 72 | 20 | 0 | 1308 | 4.36 | 5 th |
| Build house(s) | 40 | 432 | 0 | 308 | 30 | 810 | 2.70 | 6 th |
| Okada business is not sustainable | 100 | 264 | 12 | 308 | 58 | 742 | 2.47 | 7 th |
| Ability to bequeath to children | 0 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 284 | 316 | 1.05 | 11 th |
| High living standard | 0 | 32 | 12 | 560 | 8 | 612 | 2.04 | 9 th |
| Ability to ride Okada for 30 years | 0 | 32 | 0 | 60 | 262 | 354 | 1.18 | 10 th |

that could earn them immediate gains and not future development. This might have a negative effect on the country's growth and development, hence the need to rescue the situation.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study investigates the factors driving Okada 'Commercial motorcyclist' Business among Youths and its implication on youth development in Ekiti and Ondo States. A total of 300 respondents were randomly selected from the list of registered Okada riders in 16 take off points in the two states, while a structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from them. Findings show that most of the Okada riders were young, belong into all marital status with moderate family sizes, and mostly literate. The average years of engaging in Okada riding was 3.8 years. A good percentage (41%) was formerly employed. The factors that pushed them to Okada business are economic depression, unattractive vocational jobs, poverty, erratic power supply, retrenchments and unemployment and the lack of fund to start a vocation. The pull factors include: Ability to get daily income from Okada, ease of entry the business, high returns from the business when compared to other vocations, ability to be famous and popular among peers and a quick money making venture arising from the quest to meet the basic needs of life. They agreed that Okada could have effects on their future through untimely death, accidents, deformities and health challenges but had a tendency to sustain their family. Okada business was not found to sustain their future through the purchase of car(s) building houses, engaged them till retirement age or for 30 years as well as a vocation to bequeath to children.

5.2 Conclusion

The factors that pressed youth to Okada business are economic depression, unattractive vocational jobs, poverty, erratic power supply, retrenchments and unemployment and the lack of fund to start a vocation. The attractions include: Ability to get daily income from Okada, ease of entry the business, high returns from the business when compared to other vocations, ability to be famous and popular among peers and a quick money making venture. Okada business could have negative effects on the

future of the youth and wasn't considered as a vocation to bequeath to children. However, it has the tendency to sustain their family in the face of unemployment.

The implications of the findings of the study is that the high proportion of Nigerian youths in Okada business is morbid to the development of the nation and requires urgent attention to forestall a bleak future.

5.3 Recommendations

Government should put in place strategies to invigorate the economy of Nigeria. The vocational sector should be improved through the provision of enabling environment in terms of stable and uninterrupted power supply, capital, subsidy and credit facilities and land. Data of the youth in Okada business should be captured, seminars, workshops and trainings in different vocations should be organized for the youths. After the trainings, they should be given adequate start-up capitals and linked to a business mentor to embark on the vocations of their choice. The vocational and technical education sectors should be resuscitated and furnished with sophisticated modern equipment. The implementation of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda is a step in the right direction but should be pursued vigorously to change the mind-set of youths about agriculture as a poor man's job. Nigerians should be encouraged to patronize locally made goods while government should ban imported goods. Government should also establish quality control of goods made in Nigeria.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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