

EFFECTS OF BANNING OF COMMERCIAL MOTORCYCLES ON
SECURITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
A STUDY OF MINNA METROPOLIS

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Abstract

Serial killings of security officials particularly, police men persist in Niger State, North Central Nigeria, when the issue of Boko Haram and its associated violent activities were at their peak in the Nigeria, sometimes toward the end of year 2013, became an issues of great concern. This incident triggered a ban on the use of motorcycles as commercial means of transport in the state. As authorities in the state believed the perpetrators of those killings were using motor cycles to escape from crime scenes. But soon as the ban took effect in January, 2014, security and safety concerns raised earlier by the Niger State officials to rationalise the ban, immediately led to an increased in poverty, youth restiveness and crime rates. This paper examines these development challenges and their security implications. Consequently, in depth interviews were conducted with motorcycle (Kabu Kabu) operators, medical personnel and police officials and analysed with simple percentage and verbatim methods. The result shows that the purported victory the ban had given the Niger State authorities was short lived and turned pyrrhic, as it sparked- off resentments, discontent and restiveness among youths in the state capital. This paper therefore suggests a holistic youth empowerment policy which will engage the teeming unemployed youths in the state. Such effort will not only checkmate the growing youth discontent, it will also arrest upsurge of violent crimes that may go along with it.

Key Words: Security; Violent crime; Poverty; unemployment; youth restiveness and national development

Introduction

Nigeria is a populous country with over half of its estimated 170 million people less than 40 years old, (Williams, 2014). This signifies that the country has energetic population who by virtue of its age remains curious. This type of youth population is an asset to a country if properly managed and could also be of a great interest to policy makers. This result especially when inadequate provisions are made

for managing them. This second situation is in what Nigeria finds itself today. In Nigeria, youth unemployment has become one of the most serious socio-economic problems. Ajufu (2013), observed from the excerpts of statistics obtained from the National Manpower Board and Federal Bureau of Statistics in 2012 showed that Nigeria has a youth population of eighty (80) million representing 60 percent of its total population and sixty four (64) million of them are unemployed while one million six hundred thousand (1.6 million) are underemployed. Unemployment has therefore, become a major problem bedevilling the lives of Nigerian youth causing frustration, dejection and dependency on family members and friends, who also have their own problems to contend with.

However, it is not unemployment alone that challenged the youth in Nigeria, insecurity is another, especially the one brought about by the activities of Boko Haram. Onyebuchi and Chigozie (2013:4) defined insecurity as a reduced capacity and capability of the government to safeguard and protect the country, property and persons etc., against attacks by any deviant person or group. Insecurity occurs when the government is unable to protect its citizens and residents, cherished values and interest from threat. The authors further explain that 'a country also experiences insecurity when human rights, economic opportunities and the sanctity of human lives are constantly violated with little or no effort on the part of government to nip it in the bud. It can rightly said that Nigeria of today is insecure as there are reasonable evidence to show that violent extremist groups are now having field day in wanton and unprovoked destruction of lives and property' of innocent Nigerian citizenry .

In Niger State, Kolo, Gyong and Heillendendu (2014) in a study reported that neglect and maltreatment of youth facilitated poverty, social exclusion from the side of parents are other challenges being faced by youths in the State. The authors then averred that neglected youths created stressful and negative emotional situations in them particularly when social capital that will cushion the effects was lacking from the family and the community. This type of situation could stir violence in society. Scholars such as Murray (2011) have long noticed that human beings act violently that is they act with the intent to physically or mentally harm one another

Security is another important issue of discussion in this paper. Something experts believe is fundamental to human existence. According to Alemika (2011) security has several dimensions: There are several interrelated domains of security, physical, emotional, social, economic and political. However, physical security is protection from threat or act of violence by individuals, groups or the state is a precondition for human existence and orderly society.

This paper examines public perception on government ban on the use of motor cycles as means of transport in Niger State, its effects on the lives of commercial motor-cyclists and highlights certain social and developmental implications which followed. Against this background, the paper is divided into six sections. The first section is this introductory unit, which is followed by section two which presents the conceptual clarifications and theoretical framework, while the third section runs the overview of youth unemployment in Niger state and the rationale for the ban. The fourth is the methods adopted, just as fifth section presents the findings of the research. The sixth and final section presents the conclusion and recommendations which are tied to the findings of the study.

Conceptual clarification

Violence: The term violence means different things to different people, and therefore public health researchers defined violence as “threatened or actual use of physical force against a person or group that results or likely to result in injury or death” (Mercy et, al. 1993:8). Also Murray (2011) sees violence as an attempt by human beings to act with the intent to physically or mentally harm one another. However, Carmecheal (n.d) sees violence as that behaviour which is an uncontrolled response to some form of

stimulation. According to her, violent behaviour is more likely to be a physical response to the perception that the 'self', ie. one's sense of identity, is threatened. Being violated either emotionally or physically appears to result in a violent response. Violent behaviour can be seen as a mask which protects the 'self from pain and memories of traumatic experiences. The common denominator in all the definitions has to do with aggression, use of force or otherwise to inflict pain on individual or group.

Security

Like most concepts in social sciences, security definition is as diverse as scholars defining it. While some scholars see security as the safety and survival of the state and its citizens from harm or destruction or from dangerous threats. Others believe it to be a situation wherein a person or thing is not exposed to any form of danger or risk of physical or moral aggression, accident, theft or deterioration.

Lamorde,(2012:2) defines security as the ability to protect lives and property, as well as the capacity to provide food, reduction in the level of poverty, unemployment and risks of all kinds (such as infrastructural decay, accidents, flooding, air mishaps, diseases etc.) This is a very broad definition of security, some aspects of which are beyond the context of this paper.

As far as this paper is concern, the focus is not about national security or security from the international perspective, rather security from the narrower concept of human security which concentrates on physical inviolability of the individual.

Violent crime: Violent kind of crime can be defined as aggressive behaviour toward an individual with actual use of physical force that may result in some form of physical and emotional trauma that could be considered as violence against person. Among the category that are classified as violent crime are rape, child sexual abuse, non-accidental injury to children, wife battering, assault in custody, victims of war , civil unrest and ethnic violence (see Madeson,2000). However, it needs to be noted that violent crimes are variety of criminal offences that vary from country to country. For instance, Nelson, Bromley and Thomas (2001) included the following acts; murder, attempted murder, wounding and assault, rape and indecent assault and robbery. Igwe (2012) in a study of urban violence in Nigeria reports that are predominant in Nigeria are murders, kidnappings and robbery and armed robbery.that urban violence expresses itself in different ways in Nigeria. The type of violence

National Development

The dual concepts of national development can only be understood fully if the meaning of development is provided. Development can be viewed as complete positive change at the micro (individual) level and macro (societal) level. The changes often involved social, political and economic wellbeing. In that line Sen 1993 cited in Akpotor (2012:184) view development as:

improvement of people's living standard in income and consumption level of food, medical services, education etc. Through relevant economic growth processes, creation of conditions for the growth of people's self esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which promotes human dignity and respect, increasing peoples freedom of choice by enlarging the range of the choice available.

Going by these criteria, it is quiet difficult to conclude on whether Nigeria is a developing nation or has even taken the part to development in the first instance. Karofi (2012: 355) is of the point that if a nation is to attain sustainable development then, individual and institutions in the society should not have the fear of crimes nor there should presence of insecurity for both the institutions and members within that society. We can, therefore, conclude that in the presences of poverty, unemployment, youth restiveness and rise in violent crimes, one can't talk of national development.

Overview of Youth Unemployment as precursor to violence and insecurity in Niger State

According to the 2006 census figure, Niger State has a population of 3,950,249 people (NPC,2006), and a projected population of 4,689,982 people at the close of year 2011(NPC,2012).By year the 2008, cumulatively, 55.9 percent of Niger State population was within age bracket 10 and 44 years, and two years later the figure went to 59.7,(NPC,2010:18).

On employment, out of 42,524 unemployed graduates that registered with the Niger State Office of the Head of Service, Human Resources Unit, only 8,534 were employed, representing only 20.07 percent of those who registered with the unit(HOS,2015). This figure represent only a small section of unemployed youths in the state, as only degree, higher national diploma holders and graduates from colleges of education, who were informed of the employment scheme, that were included. The dark and grey figures associated with official statistics need to be put into consideration also, to be able to understand and appreciate unemployment problem in Niger State.

Furthermore, it should also be noted at this point that Niger State is not an industrialised state. There are very few functional industries in the State. Aside from the Dana Pharmaceutical Company situated at Minna, the state capital, no industry in Niger State that can employ upward of 100 staff presently. The state is largely a civil service one with government as the greatest employer of labour.

Similarly, Nigerian youths are stressful due to the social environment they find themselves which is presented to them by the Nigeria society. For in instance, unemployment has become a major problem bedevilling the lives of Nigerian youth causing frustration, dejection and dependency on family members and friends, who also have their own problems to contend with (Ajufu,2013). Such an environment begets hopelessness, helplessness, frustration, abandonment and neglect. Nigeria social landscape facilitates traumatised conditions. These are staircases to aggression and violence. Borum, (2011) believes that the “social causes of shame leading to violence include low status, poverty and unemployment which lead to feelings of inequality and inferiority” p 83.

Urbanisation courtesy of increase in population and rural - urban drift in Niger State has worsened the situation of unemployment. Faced with this great challenge of employment, youths take solace in the commercial motor cycle riding as coping strategy. Today in Nigeria, motorcycles form one of the modern transportation systems, (Olabode, et, al. 2013).

Rationale for the Banning of commercial motorcycles

A spate of violence through serial killings of police officers sometimes at the close of year 2013 in Niger state occasioned a ban on the use of motorcycles as commercial transport in the state (NGSG, 2014). The use of motorcycles became the first target because the perpetrators of the killings of police men- who felled victims simply for being at their duty posts at the time- were said to have used motorbikes. Within a week, five police men lost their lives in this process of people coming on motor bike to open fire on unsuspecting police men on their duty posts. This period also coincided with the time when Boko Haram violent activities were high in Nigeria. The serial killings were immediately blamed on the militant group because the method of the killing was 'similar to those employed by the insurgents in the North East' Newslines (2014).

The second concern as expressed by the Niger State authorities through the commissioner of Health Dr Ibrahim Sule in 2014 was the issue of safety of both the operators and their passengers. Hardly, will a day pass without witnessing road crashes that involved motor cycle/okada operators, some of these accidents are fatal Newslines (2014). In fact, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in a report in 2012 indicates that Niger State recorded 1,537 cases of road crashes which claimed 771 lives (NBS,2012).

Doctors decries high rate of accident victims in Minna General Hospital, (Radio Niger, 2013). Over 70 percent accident victims in Hospitals in Minna were operators of Kabu Kabu/Okada, (Newline, 2013). All these concerns expressed from different quarters, might have informed the decision of the said ban.

On Thursday, 02 January, 2014, the ban on the use of motor cycle as commercial means of transport took effect through an executive Order issued by the then Governor Dr. Muazu Babangida Aliyu in a Government Gazette of 30th December, 2013. The Order was an extraction of the existing Road Traffic Law CAP. 118, Laws of Niger State 1989 and ironically not from a direct Bill for an Act sent to the State House of Assembly.

Furthermore, the second (2) clause of the Order stated that: “the use of motorcycles for any purpose whatsoever in Minna , Bosso, Chanchaga,Maitumbi, Kpakungu and Maikunkele is hereby prohibited”. The Order went on to explain the first blanket order in its clause three (3) in the following words:

“Notwithstanding the provision of clause (2) above, a rider of motorcycles in Minna, Bosso, Chanchaga,Maitumbi, Kpakungu and Maikunkele may be allowed to ride his motorcycle between 7.01 a. m. to (sic) 6.59 p.m. each day provided: (a) The Motorcycle is registered under the Vehicle Inspection Office/Department of the Niger State Ministry of Transport; (b) That the rider of the motorcycle shall not carry any person or a passenger”.

Defaulters of this Order, shall have their motorcycles forfeited to the government or go to jail for three months or a fine of N50,000 or both. For second time offender, the punishment are stiffer with a jail term of six months, a fine of N100,000 or both.

Theoretical framework

Strain Theory:

The strain theory was initiated by a French sociologist Emile Durkheim in his classic work *The Division of Labour in Society* (1894, 1984) where he explained how social conditions influenced normative regulation and deviance rates in society. Using the concept of anomie, which he referred to as, situations when society fails to provide the appropriate cultural regulatory codes – normative values and beliefs – which are necessary to regulate the cooperation of individuals in complex societies, Durkheim is often referred to as the proponent of strain theory. The theory was later expanded by American Sociologists Robert K. Merton and Robert Agnew.

This theory holds that individuals will turn to a life of crime or violence when they are strained, or when they are unable to achieve the goals of the society be it power, finance, or some other desirable goals. Often referred to as General Strain Theory (GST) is seen as a psychosocial concept that can explain individual-level offending. Slocum,(2014:2460) explain that:

The crux of this theory is that strain – resulting from exposure to noxious stimuli, the removal of positive stimuli, or blocked goals – elicits negative emotions including fear, depression, and most importantly, anger. Illicit coping mechanisms, including offending, substance abuse, and other problem behaviours, may be used in an effort to relieve these negative emotions.

Youths in Niger State see the ban as a blockage of their means of survival and accordingly react with violence and restiveness out of frustration. This is the guiding theory for this study.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the city of Minna, the Niger state capital where the Motor cycle ban Order covers. The interviews were conducted using accidental sampling procedure among three different set of people who in this paper were referred to as stakeholders. They include the Kabu Kabu (Okada) operators, medical personnel and security officials, particularly the police. The interview was conducted with 23 respondents. The study was an exploratory one designed to gain insight into a policy of government that has direct impact on the people and the reaction of them afterwards, rather than to test any specific hypotheses.

Some fifteen (15) Kabu/Okada operators were selected for interview through accidental simple sampling method. A ride was taken with some of them while some were selected based on their expressed interest to participate in the interview at designated areas across Minna. The four selected area doubles as areas where constant violent activities by youths are often recorded. It was from those affected areas that four each of police and health personnel interviewed were selected. The areas selected were Limawa, Chanchaga, Maitumbi and Kpakungu. Which are all parts of the Minna metropolis.

Implications of motorcycles ban at Minna

Rubin(1976) and Jonker and Pennink (2010) provided the guide for organizing our findings. The basics techniques included an examination of the information based on specific issues and themes. Verbatim quotations from the interview, the authors argued, provide the reader with a comprehension of how the respondents have defined their life situations. These data explore the impacts of the ban on the use of motorcycle for commercial purposes in Niger State.

Soon as the ban was melted down on the people of Minna and its environs, observers began to pick holes in the law which they described as too harsh and too far away from the social reality in the state."There is double standard with this law. Imagine a government that designed a policy document called vision 3:2020, the realisation of which hinges largely on provision of youth employment and empowerment, is coming out with this draconian law to further remove the safety nets people have improvised to reduce the effects of unemployment on them".Said a 32 year old respondent.

Another respondent says:

Government do anything she likes without thinking of the poor. Talba should know that we (Kabu Kabu/Okada) operators contributed to his coming as we voted for him. How can he come up with this policy that will starve us? A 25 year old respondent react to the ban with the following words: how would I cope? Through this Okada business I feed my family. With the ban that has not provides alternative, I don't know what to do. (interview 2019)

However, not all respondents were bitter with the ban. Some of them see it as a welcome policy that was long overdue. Their reasons catered on safety and health issues. One of the respondents, 27 year nurse reacted this way: the ban is good. It has reduced drastically the number of accident victims we record in our hospitals. Also said a 31 year old respondent who was concerned with the carefree attitude of Kabu Kabu/Okada operators on the road: the reckless way these Kabu Kabu/Okada operators ride their motorbikes on the road call for concern and every right thinking person will welcome this ban. At least, we are free from witnessing wailing victims on our roads.

On the compounding problem of unemployment, the consensus view was that the ban did not take cognizance of the reality on ground, the security and safety reasons notwithstanding. The government, they said, cannot claimed ignorance of the horde of youths that roam our streets daily without jobs. For instance, the Vision3:2020 which hopes to catapult Niger State to be among the three (3) most industrialised and developed states in Nigeria by the year 2020, recognised that; " youths account for about 60 percent of the state's population of about 4 million people. Even though, they constitute the strength, bedrock and the future of the state growing economy, however, there is mass unemployment among youth in the state,"(NGSG,2008:250). Even with the official acknowledgement of presence of mass unemployment, the Order failed to consider it as a factor necessary for peace and security of the state, as indicated by respondents.

Nothing can be as disturbing and inhuman than the Talba's motorcycle ban policy. The unemployed and the poor are not considered. Most of us don't have job that's why we do okada. To

go to school requires money which I don't have. The little "Keke Talba" or tri- cycle provided for us (Kabu Kabu/Okada operators) as a means of alleviating our suffering as unemployed, has been taken over by politicians, some of them got up to 10 while, we (Kabu Kabu/Okada operators)have nothing, said a 23 years old respondent. (Interview 2019)

Another 31 year old respondent was philosophical in this regard.

If these politicians fail to think of the common man on the street, the one they see on daily basis. How do you expect them to design policies that will take care of those in the villages who they do not see always? Only God will save the poor from them.

One other salient by-product of the ban was the upsurge of crime in all its ramifications. Shortly after the ban on the use of Motorcycle took effect on Minna metropolis, tension began to heighten among the people, particularly the affected youths who see themselves as hopeless, rejected and frustrated. Theft of electronics, snatching of cell phones and hand bags, breaking into people's houses in the neighbourhoods, became common happenings. Motor bike theft, robbery and even murders began to take place in quick successions.

For instance on 17th November, 2014, at Limawa primary school within Minna metropolis, young men in their numbers, came within the hours of 9 and 10 to harass the teachers and the pupils in the school. Eight (8) persons were later arrested who claimed they were looking for a friend who offended them, (Newline, 2014:3).

Again, at Maitumbi, another area of Minna metropolis on 11th November, 2014, a young man of about 23 was axed to death shortly after Friday prayer. His crime was that he belongs to the gang that snatched the perpetrator's girl friend (Radio, Niger, 2014).

The following week, precisely on 1st of December, 2014, two (2) other young men were killed by an irate youths from New market area on a reprisal mission at Maitumbi again. For close to two hours, irate youths took over the major street of Maitumbi, sacked the police at Flamingo junction and were armed with dangerous weapons. Road users were forced to divert (Radio, Niger, 2014).

Yet again, on 2nd December, 2014, a reprisal attack once again in Maitumbi claimed one life leaving some three wounded. At this point a 12 hour curfew was imposed, (Radio, Niger, 2014).

This informed one respondent's decision to observe that; aside from the fact that the ban has affected the means of livelihood of most of these youths, which had created tension and frustration, the seizure and subsequent sale of the defaulter's motorbikes, triggered the restiveness of the youths.

After the close of Governor Muazu's Administration in Niger State, at the venue of his handover of power to his successor, he was pelted with pebbles and sachet water, by angry youths who were shouting: "where are our motor cycles" (DailyTrust, 30/5/15)

Similarly, a respondent summarized the unfolding phenomenon in Niger State as uneasy calm. According to him what the youths often exhibit on the streets represent a signal of growing tension underground: these youths are not alone in this case. I personally lost my motorcycle to this controversial law. I am also aware of several other civil servants in Minna who also had their motorbikes seized while they were either going to work, convey children to school or spouses to hospitals. A neighbour of mine, who felled victim, took the motorcycle on loan. He has not finish payment for that machine.....how do you expect such a person to feel.... (interview 2019)

Furthermore, yet a 32 years respondent corroborated by saying that: even security men were affected. There are many of them who forfeited their motorcycles for being unable to pay the charged 50,000 naira...you brought a law to secure the people and you are in away attacking security agents and education.. I don't just know where this will lead us to in this state. (Interview 2019)

Discussions of the Findings

One major discovery of this paper is that youths in Niger State wearied initially with unemployment and mass poverty which were in themselves sources of frustration, became more frustrated with the ban on commercial motor cycle riding- their save haven. As attested to by one of them. A 25 year old respondent react to the ban with the following words: how would I cope? Through this Okada business I feed my family. With the ban that has not provides alternative, I don't know what to do. Yet another respondent lamented that only God could intervene for the poor which is another sign of frustration. The respondent further stressed with a question when he asked: If these politicians fail to think of the common man on the street, the one they see on daily basis. How do you expect them to design policies that will take care of those in the villages who they do not see always? Only God will save the poor from them. The finding is in-tuned with the view of Delisi and Piquiero (2011) who stressed that poverty begets frustration which eventually leads to crime. It is stated that conditions of poverty increases the likelihood that a person will commit crime, be apprehended and be the victim of crime (Delisi and Piquiero,2011).

The ban also brought with it issues of security as criminal violence in forms of youth restiveness and reprisal attacks were abound. For instance Radio Niger reported that after a young man was axed down for being a member of a gang that snatched the perpetrator's girl friend, reprisal attacks followed. Precisely on 1st of December, 2014, two (2) other young men were killed by an irate youths from New market area on a reprisal mission at Maitumbi again. For close to two hours, irate youths took over the major street of Maitumbi, sacked the police at Flamingo junction and were armed with dangerous weapons. Road users were forced to divert (Radio, Niger,2014). This is also in accord with some researchers who link search for honour and vengeance as language of the street. Violent behaviour can be seen as a mask which protects the 'self from pain and memories of traumatic experiences. The thinking is that violence often times occur over argument that has to do with social honour. Stephen,(1997) According to Borum (2011), people begin to climb the staircase to violence with a desire to alleviate adversity and improve their situation. Unsuccessful attempts, however, lead to frustration, producing feelings of aggression, which are displaced onto some perceived causal agent (who is then regarded as an enemy). With this ban in place, most youths see the government as their enemy, because it has stopped them from looking from their daily bread without providing alternatives .

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Ban on the use of motorcycle Order of December, 2013 in Minna, Niger State came to create more than the problems it was designed to solve. The mounting tension, rise in crime and spontaneous increase in poverty and unemployment among the people, became more apparent than the safety and security issues that rationalised the ban Order in the first place. These are all challenges of development. However, the temporary reprieve being enjoyed by the Okada operators in the State came to reduce growing tension and its attendant security implications if allowed to burst. The new administration seemed to have read the message when his predecessor was pelted by angry youths, before his very eyes.

One major drawback of this paper is a exploratory one which focuses on a single government policy- the ban on the use of motor cycle for commercial purpose in Minna metropolis. A more critical, possibly an explanatory research using longitudinal technique that could bring salient issues bothering on security, crime, youth restiveness as they hamper development in Niger state, could be more appropriate.

In view of the growing tension among the youths in the state, it can be suggested here that the ban Order be modify to allow motorcycle operators carry out their business alongside the tricycle (Keke NAPEP) operators that up till date inadequate.

A holistic youth empowerment programme should be instituted to engage this army of youths roaming our streets. The Graduate employment Scheme of the past administration in the state should be re-awakened for educated ones while vocational skill acquisition schemes for the non educated youths. A sound moral education for children and thorough family reorientation is needed in our society that is growing in violent activities by the day.

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