

FEMALE COMMERCIAL DRIVING AND ROAD SAFETY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study aims to examine female commercial drivers in Ibadan metropolis, their motivations and challenges with male counterparts and the general public. The study employed a cross-sectional design and a qualitative method of data collection. The purposive sampling technique was used to select study locations in Ibadan while the snowball sampling was used to select 20 female commercial drivers. An in-depth interview guide was used to gather data. Findings reveal that the primary motivation for engaging in commercial driving is Survival, family support and lack of employment. Despite the challenges encountered, female commercial drivers desire to continue because it is profitable. Results also demonstrate that their spouses (husbands) are not entirely contributing to the wellbeing of the family. The profession lacks legal framework for the safety and protection of women on the wheels when going about their duties. The study recommends that the state government should come up with a legal framework and policies for the safety of female commercial drivers.

Keywords: Female Commercial drivers, Ibadan Metropolis, Road Safety, Sustainable Development

1.0 Introduction

Imagine a world without transportation, man would have to walk millions of miles to reach his designated destination. Humans laudable and articulate plans and activities would be unsuccessful and moribund. Products, goods and services would be clamped down and redundant. Transportation is that oxygen that every human breathes upon either at the International, National or local level. The daily human endeavour is majorly dependent on it. This industry has successfully become inseparable with the people given the help it renders to them. People move from one place to another to achieve their set goals for the day, weeks, months and annually with the assistance of transportation. While some are mobile, some use commercial transport for the same purpose. Financial exchange is made between the people and the industry which ensures that the people get to their destinations based on the monetary exchange done. This phenomenal industry is perceived as the pillar of both national and local economy, especially in the developing climes. To establish the significance of this industry, Fourie, (2003) asserted that taxis constitute about 65% or more of all passengers' journeys and render mobility service to about 3 to 5 million people on a daily basis. In

line with Fourie (2003), The National Survey posits that 46% of African in urban areas in South Africa travel by taxis, followed by bus(20%) and train (13%). It can be said that transportation system has made man's journey easy, accessible and affordable. That is why Armstrong -Wright,(1987) maintained that it is an essential means of moving large number of people with considerable flexibility in order to meet individual needs.

Results show that, use of taxi is common in most African cities like Ghana, South Africa and Nigeria, and dominantly in urban cities (Khosa, 1997). Road transportation business started in the early 1920s in Nigeria, introduced by the British colonialists. Nigerian Indigenous transporters by early 1930s had become involved in the business (Ajaegbo, 2013). The sector has since become one of the major employer of labour in Nigeria and has impacted Nigerians in various ways. Given the fact that all citizens cannot provide for themselves means of transportation, it then becomes appropriate that the people and the commercial drivers are necessary partners. The system provides access to communities which is modus operandi for easy and smooth running of manufacturing, production, retail businesses, labour, agriculture, and real estate market(Olamigoke & Emmanuel, 2013). Services rendered have significant impacts on the socio-economic activities of Nigeria, owing to the fact that large fraction of the working populations travel on commercial vehicles for social activities. It plays a very supportive role to other means of transportation, air, water, rail and animals. No wonder it is a general notion among scholars that the road transportation industry, occupies a pride of place in the socio-economic development of the human race (Olanrewaju & Falola, 1986; Olukaju, 1996; Daniel, 2011 in Olubomehin, 2012).

In the developing countries like Nigeria, large of the population move on commercial vehicles. People embark on journey for businesses, festivals, recreation, social, religious as well as cultural activities via transportation. Adejumo (2013) affirmed that raw materials and finished goods are equally moved over a long distance either for production or to consumers through the same medium. It is therefore a need to conclude that deficient road transportation system can hinder a nation's ability to sufficiently utilize its natural resources convey food and other finished products, harmonise the manufacturing and agricultural strata of the economy as well as make provision for education, medical and other infrastructural facilities(Olamigoke & Emmanuel, 2013). Globally, there has been a change in the customary values assigned to women. These values are caretakers and homebuilders. The United Nations Conference on women in 1995 stated that there has been an increase in the advocacy for women rights and economic freedom. This is to say that women are increasingly becoming active participants in the labour force with some level of economic independence in developing and advanced countries (Andinet, 2020). Economic insecurity has made women to venture into this male profession called commercial driving. Commercial driving is perceived to be a profession that deals with conveying of people, products, goods and services to their various designated destinations through buses, taxis, motorcycle(Okada), train, and Keke Napep(Marwa). Interestingly, women are now full participators in the men's prescribed occupation with the use of Keke napep (Marwa) giving their time and energy to earn a living for family sustenance and financial strength.

To this end, the perception that driving is a male dominated profession in the transportation industry is gradually fading away. Female commercial drivers are becoming increasingly prevalent in the South West Nigeria. Whilst this is a positive development for gender equality, there are concerns about their safety as they perform this duty. Therefore, it is against this background that this study seeks to unravel the motivations of women in commercial driving and the challenges they face with their male counterparts and other stakeholders in Ibadan South West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

1.1 Research Objectives

Given the above background and problem statement, the following objectives formed the basis for this study:

- i. To identify factors that influenced female commercial drivers to venture into commercial driving.
- ii. To investigate the challenges female commercial drivers face in Ibadan South West Local Government Area
- iii. To examine the legal protection for female commercial drivers in Ibadan South West Local Government Area.

2.0 Federal Road Safety Commission in Nigeria

Established in 1988 with the main objective to enforce total road traffic rules and regulations, enlightening citizens on road safety and crash prevention issues. The Federal Road Safety Commission has been working hand in hand with members of the road transport workers unions in different areas in different part of the state in the country, which include standard setting which involves policy formulation. A classical example is the Road Transport Safety Standardization Scheme (RTSSS) a regulatory policy which stipulates minimum safety requirements for road transport users. The establishment act of the agency equally empowers the Federal Road Safety Commission of Nigeria to have a data base of all transport operators having up to five vehicles in their fleet.

As an agency, certification and registration of operators is one of their sole responsibilities to the citizens, safety officers and all necessary operational activities may be required from time to time (Olagunju, 2010). The agency also ensure that all transport operators especially those on inter- state road transport services establish a safety unit. The appointment of safety officers as the head of the unit as well as sanction any unit that fails to comply to instructions is done by the agency. The Federal Road Safety Commission ensures that fleet owners employ competent and trained drivers; provide standard terminus/registered office in that environ or community that would devoid of traffic problems and congestion, ensure provision of road safety policy, operate holistic vehicle maintenance policy for road worthiness of their vehicles.

In addition, the commission brought on board the issue of passengers manifest especially on inter-state journeys, vehicle inspection and assessment to verify claims of compliance by commercial vehicle owners and drivers and enforcement of standards with other security agencies In Nigeria, The Road Safety Agency is also responsible for

certification of driving schools, executes public enlightenment programmes and licensing (Obayemi, 2010). The commission equally legislate, prosecute defaulters and even impound vehicles to establish sanity on highways.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is explained by the sex role theory. The sex role theory was propounded by Hentscel in 2019. The theory is based on the premise that members of the society learn the specific ways and patterns to behave from the societal institution. When physiological needs are threatened, the quest for survival is aroused. To this end, insufficient access to the primary needs of life may force a woman to rise above stereotypically designed roles, by taking up duties customarily ascribed to men. Hence, when a man becomes feeble and unavailable to cater for his family, the woman will be gingered by her survival instinct, to tilt towards role accumulation.

2.2 The Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development hinges upon a society able to maintain its level of political, economic, cultural, and educational status in a short and long run which is the highest form of social growth. In September 25, 2015 the United Nations General Assembly came up with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development as a framework for International development. The purpose of this agenda is to eradicate poverty, tackling of climate change, building peaceful, resilient, equitable and inclusive societies. International Institute for sustainable development perceived sustainable development to mean environment, economic, and social well being for today and tomorrow. Sustainable development was brought into common usage by the world commission on environment and development in 1987 report. The report conceptualised sustainable development as human progress that meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This study resonates with SDG eight (8) which states: **Inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**. This is to say that by 2030 which is the projected year by United Nations that everyone must have been economically independent, being productive by what he or she does for a living without being burdensome to people and the society. The target is to ensure equal employment opportunities for all, irrespective of your status and gender. Sustainable Development Goals has become a password that resonate across all levels in today's knowledge industry. In achievement of this goal, proper training and education in driving and road safety for the female drivers is fundamental to break the issue of gender stereotypes, provision of more job opportunities, and social acceptance and respect from their peers and clients.

2.3 Road Safety and Sustainable Development

Road safety refers to the protection and security of road users from danger and unforeseen circumstances. It is an encompassing understanding of drivers' behaviour and attitudes within the traffic environment in a specific country. This comprises of the

road infrastructure, vehicles, road user behavior and general traffic safety management. It is the measure which must be adopted by everyone while using roads. It relates to the construction, layout of roads as well as traffic regulation. However, not everyone is conscious enough to know that safety is of essence while on the wheels. Some drive recklessly which leads to accident and emergencies while some obey the traffic rule and conscious of his safety. One of the components of human security is Personal Security, which talks about our safety as individual in the community. Personal security on the road cannot be downplayed as human lives is paramount to existence. It is a critical concern in Nigeria as the country has one of the highest rates of road accidents in the world. According to Federal Road Safety Corps, (FRSC), over 10,000 people died in road accidents in 2020. It is a serious conversation in public health which has impact on everyone, whether one drives a vehicle, walks or rides a cycle.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals and United Nations Global plan for the Decade of Action on Road Safety, the road Safety Strategy for United Nations system aims at reducing the level of road traffic fatalities and injuries through managing the interaction between speed, vehicles, road infrastructure and road user behaviour in a holistic manner.

Road safety-related sustainable development goals and targets are:

SDG Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

SDG Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

According to United Nations, by 2030, people will have access to safe, affordable accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons. While the pillars of action plan for road safety system are; road safety management, Safer road and mobility, Safer vehicles, Safer road users, post-crash response and Safer Road Environment.

Pillar 1: Road safety management : It centers on the need to strengthen institutional capacity to support national road safety efforts.

Pillar 2: Safer roads and mobility: focuses on the need to improve the safety and quality of road networks for the benefit of all road users, especially the most vulnerable: pedestrians, motorcyclists, bicyclists and keke-Napep users.

Pillar 3: Safer Vehicles addresses the need for improved vehicle safety technologies for both passives and active safety through the harmonization of relevant global standards, consumer information schemes and incentives to accelerate the uptake of new technologies.

Pillar 4: Safer road users

This is hinge upon developing holistic programmes to improve road user behavior such as sustained enforcement of laws and standards, combined with public awareness to increase seat-belt and helmet wearing rates, and to reduce drink-driving speed and other risk factors.

Pillar 5: Post-crash response highlights on increased responsiveness to post-crash emergencies and improve the ability of health and other systems to provide appropriate emergency treatment.

To achieve this colourful goals and plans for the safety of female drivers, establishment of road safety policy addressing all pillars and promote safe operation, maintenance and improvement of roads in local communities. Inclusion of female commercial drivers in the transport sector is essential for promoting road safety for sustainable development in this region. Women have the potentials to excel in the profession, and with the right support and training, they can help to reduce the numbers of road accidents and fatalities in the region as they demonstrate discipline and safety consciousness while driving.

2.4 Empirical review

Effective transport system is a facsimile of a thriving and healthy nation capable of enhancing spatial interactions. It plays a pivotal role in the global economy hence, the need to provide accessible to all categories of people. Nigeria has the largest road network in West Africa and the second largest south of the Sahara. Research reveals that there are approximately 12 million registered vehicles using Nigeria's road, at 85 cars per 1000 people (WHO, 2013). Transport system creates and maintains livable communities by reducing congestion and assuring long term sustainability of resource consumption. Khosa (1997) investigated Sisters on slippery wheels: women taxi drivers in South Africa. The study reveals that women encounter discrimination in employment practices, sexual harassment of women taxi drivers and commuters, and unequal power relations between women and men in the taxi industry. The study suggests that overcoming gender biases could aid in overcoming many of the negative perceptions expressed, especially about the taxi industry.

Owolabi, et al (2021) investigated changing times and women on the wheels: a qualitative investigation of the experiences of female commercial drivers in Lagos state. Findings show that commercial driving is a physical threat to females health who engage in the profession. The need to survive and be a support to the family is also a factor that led them to venture in the business. Married women had less time to engage in commercial driving due to family responsibilities. The study suggests that female commercial drivers be protected from all sorts of violence and sexual harassment. NGOs should adopt female drivers sponsoring and granting scholarships for their children and assist to purchase the vehicles used.

Also, Hussin, et al (2014) carried out an investigation into attitudes and awareness of road safety among 384 drivers in Tripoli, Libya. Outcome of the study show that drivers' age and gender have significant influence on attitudes and knowledge of traffic law. However, male drivers (74%) were found to have better knowledge on traffic law than female (61%). The study suggests further knowledge and investigation of driving behavior of commercial drivers and traffic safety management.

In another study by McHugh (2011), on road safety and older drivers' behaviour in Monaghan. It was confirmed that although habits like drunk driving and speeding are major risk behavior on roads are common among older drivers, but they still drive more

carefully on roads than younger drivers. Shinar, et al (2001) investigated the nexus between demographic characteristics of drivers and driving behavior. Results show that only female drivers were more law-abiding than their male counterparts. Age and educational status greatly influence use of seat belt, while higher education and income level were significantly related with speeding.

From the reviewed literature, it can be said that there is a paucity of empirical research on female commercial driving and road safety for sustainable development in Ibadan metropolis. In view of this, this study examines female commercial driving and road safety for sustainable development. Analyzing their motivations and challenges with male counterparts and general public. It also identifies and discusses legal protection for female commercial drivers in the state.

3.0 Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional research design and a qualitative method of data collection. The study population comprised female respondents, commercial drivers of keke Napep from Molete, Round-About and Ogunpa metropolitan areas in Ibadan. The areas have a high number of female commercial drivers, hence, justification of the study locations.

Sampling

The purposive sampling was adopted to select the study locations. The snowball sampling technique was used to select 20 female participants for the study. The use of snowball technique was due to the nature of the study that female commercial drivers, getting them was difficult as they are the minorities at their various parks

Research Instrument and Data Collection

The study adopted a qualitative method of data collection through the use of semi structured in-depth interview guide as an instrument of data collection. Responses from the participants were tape-recorded and were later transcribed to generate themes and in accordance with the study objectives.

Methods of Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze data gathered from the interview. The researcher used a mobile phone to take photographs of each respondent and interviewee's, while cogent point were adequately noted on notes and sheets.

4.0 Data Presentation, analysis and discussion of findings.

The major findings were presented according to the research objectives. The aim of this research was to examine female commercial drivers in Ibadan metropolis, their motivations and challenges with their male counterparts and the general public. Results demonstrated that the main motivations for female engaging in commercial driving are unemployment, the need for survival, financial independent, a support system to their spouses with low income and the harsh economic situation in the country. Data gathered by the researcher shows that there are categories of female drivers in the industry.

These are the married, single mothers and the widows within the age bracket of 38-50 years old. The research participants perceive the profession as profitable and lucrative though stressful as it comes with its challenges. The female drivers experience various challenges in their day to day activities. Health challenges is one of the challenges as stated by one of the respondents such as body and joint pain and cold especially in the morning hours. While passengers are sometimes impatient with them, some are kind and tolerant. The respondents added that there is no gender discrimination among stakeholders. They enjoy the ride and feel comfortable as long as the driver takes them to their destinations irrespective of the gender, repair of the keke Napep(Marwa) when it has mechanical issues, Agberos' harassing them and maltreatment from Oyo State Road Traffic Management Authority. Female drivers are officially registered at the Park Motor System, some are not registered. They operate independently to what is called Soole. According to the Park Manager, the essence of the registration is for identification and accountability, adding that female drivers who are not registered members of Park Management System are partially protected because they are not recognised at the park. For research objective one, respondents shared reasons for embarking upon this lucrative profession. One of the respondents said this during the interview:

'I was a food seller before joining the work of keke driving. I joined the transport system because food items in the market became more expensive. I could no longer continue. I bought the keke napep through loan and I am paying it small, small with the profit I make. I love the business because I make more money daily than the food I was selling. I make 15,000 naira daily when there is high sales but when there is low sales I make up to 7,000, 8,000 , 10,000 naira. My husband is a salary earner and he is in full support of what I do now. As a woman I need to support him in the family to add to what he brings. My fellow women who are into this business have used it to build houses for themselves and I know I will also build my house through this job. I can't stop this job because I love it.

The second respondent stated that:

'I am a young nurse. The family responsibility was getting too much on us. I stopped the job when I put to bed as my boss didn't like it that I was coming to work with my baby. so I thought of what to do. A friend introduced me to the driving business. I discussed it with my husband and he agreed . I had to go and learn how to drive as I didn't know how to drive. After learning, I joined the Park Motor System which I registered and became one of their members. I come out in the morning hours because that is the time I have lots of customers especially when students are going to school and civil servants going to work.. By 1 pm which is almost time for students to close, I go out again while by 4pm government workers too are on their way home. The male counterparts are really supporting us as they don't see us as competitors while working. But if I get a good job I will stop commercial driving. (Married, 35years old)'

The third respondent from Round- About affirmed her reasons:

The economic situation of this country is getting worse by the day. And as a woman I must struggle to ensure my children eat and don't lack anything besides, there is no job anywhere, the government don't care about us so we have to arise and huzzle for ourselves. I pay for my children's school fees nobody to help me. Since I lost my husband it has not been easy for me to cater for the family as their husband is trying because they are not financially okay. I enjoyed driving but if I get a good job offer I cant stop it as long as it will help my children and myself.(A widow, 48 years old)

The fourth female respondent at Ogunpa area asserted that:

I joined this work because of my children in school and what they will eat. I have four children. two in higher institution and two in secondary school. My husband is late. My family is also trying their best to support me. My husband's family are also doing all they can to assist me but I cannot be waiting for them all the time for help that's why I need extra work that will bring enough money to cater for my children especially those in the university .I send money to my children in school to make them comfortable. As a widow, my children are my hope. But if I get a better job ,I will do it . (widow, 50years old)

Source: Author's Field Survey 2023)

Responding to research objective two, the study affirmed that female commercial drivers experienced various challenges in their day to day activity. While some Stakeholders (passengers) are sometimes impatient with them, some are kind and tolerant. The informants also added that there is no gender discrimination among stakeholders. They enjoy the ride and feel comfortable as long as the driver takes them to their destinations irrespective of the gender. The study further reveals , fixing of the keke Napep(Marwa) when it has mechanical issues is always a challenge. However, the male counterparts are always kind and helpful to repair and fix their tricycles. The male drivers don't see the females as competitors instead they extend helping hands to them and protect them given their wealth of experience in the profession. Agberos' harassing them and maltreatment from Oyo State Road Traffic Management Authority.

The fifth respondent at Molete expressed her encounter with the Agberos'and the Oyo State Road Traffic Authority:

'The Agberos' collect money from us especially at round-about even when we tell them that we are yet to make enough money. They will shout at us to pack our tricycles while the Oyo State Road Traffic Authority harass us, don't care if we are women. They treat us and talk to us like the way they will talk to their male counterparts.'

The third objective, xamined the legal framework for female commercial drivers in Local Government Area. Findings show hat there is no legal framework or policy protecting the lives and safety of the female drivers in the industry. The experience of one of the respondents shows that the industry do not have operational rules protecting them. The reaction of the interviewee is expressed below:

'There is no law anywhere to protect us. At times, when there are issues to solve, we call ourselves to settle the issue. The park manager would also call us to order to resolve the misunderstanding amongst us. We are not protected on the road, what if our lives

are in danger? Though the park manager are really trying for us to ensure peaceful existence and law abiding.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations.

Commercial female drivers are members of civil society organizations who engage in driving for commercial purpose. Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 11 are possible when the recommendations are turned to policies by policy makers in Oyo state. In view of the findings, study recommends that The Ministry of Women Affairs in Oyo State should have cordial relationship with the female drivers in the state. This would encourage effective communication and synergy where they can express their grievance to them:

- (i) Appoint a female leader as an intermediary between them and the Ministry of Women Affairs Oyo state government should provide a legal framework for the safety and protection of female drivers in the state. Oyo State Road Traffic Management Authority should be reported to the appropriate authority to caution them of their attitude towards female commercial drivers.
- (ii) The Agberos' should be called to order through the Park Management Authority by the state government.
- (iii) Also, efforts should be made to promote high level of popular education inculcation among agberos'. It would encourage them to remain calm, calculative and be able to seek clarifications and gather facts on issues before reacting.
- (iv) Periodic training should be carried out in various motor parks for women in the industry and provision of Keke napep (Marwa) by the state government to the women in the industry and potential female drivers to encourage financial independence and disabuse financial insecurity.

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