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## The Effect of Socio-Economic Survival of Okada Riders on African Cultural Values

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# The Effect of Socio-Economic Survival of *Okada* Riders on African Cultural Values

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**Abstract** - This study investigated effects of socio – economic survival of Okada riders in Abeokuta and Odeda Local Government Areas of Ogun State, Nigeria on African cultural values. The study was carried out using the questionnaire method to elicit vital information from one hundred respondents who were randomly- selected from ten Okada parks within Abeokuta metropolis and Odeda township respectively. Simple percentage and t-test statistical tools were used to analyse the data. The findings showed that Okada riding, though a lucrative enterprise has its direct and indirect bearing on the cultural values of the society. The recklessness that is associated with the business tends to erode certain cultural and moral values including respect for other road users, respect for authority and elders within the immediate environment. Majority of the riders engaged in the business because of the pressing need to survive and sustain their families. Furthermore, most of the riders did not take the necessary safety precautions, they used foul languages and drank alcohol even during business hours and these reasons have been identified as major causes for their recklessness. In Conclusion, Okada business is lucrative and can add to the Nigerian economy rather than constituting a menace. Riders should be given adequate training on societal ethics. Citizenship education should also form part of the training to be conducted for those intending to get into the trade. They should be encouraged to register properly at zonal and state levels. Moreover, the Federal, State and Local governments authorities should set up regulatory bodies empowered to monitor their activities and mode of operations.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country endowed with unquantifiable natural and human resources. Paradoxically, a greater number of the population suffer from lack, poverty and diseases, all of which have been further compounded by endemic corruption and submergence of cultural values. The quest for survival economically and socially has driven many Nigerians into various jobs including riding of commercial motorcycle popularly known as 'Okada' business. Thus, hundreds of okada riders barely trained and untrained;

usually flock the roads of major cities and townships as well as rural areas carrying luggages and conveying people to their destinations. Okada business has contributed to easy movement of people not only in the rural areas where there is poor network of roads but also in the cities where there are traffic hold-ups with its attendant consequences. These include accidents, increasing incidences of the use of okada for nefarious activities like robbery and the likes. Much has been said and written on these vices but little attention has been paid to the submergence of much cherished African cultural values of sacredness of life, respect for authority and elders, responsible and orderly behaviour in the conduct of okada riders. It is against this background that this study is set out to investigate effects of socio-economic survival of Okada riders on African cultural values. This paper examined the concept of cultural values in relation to Okada business as a means of survival and its contributions to the development of the Nigerian economy.

## II. CULTURAL VALUE SYSTEM

Values reflect individual and collective interests of groups of people living in a society and every society is open to conflicting values subject to several possibilities - opportunities and threats induced by change or innovation. From Bassey Andah's perspective, values, reveal themselves in social relations manifesting severally or uniformly in groups existing within a society. By implication, every group may share same value system but individual response, adherence and attachment to such values is subject significantly, to relative meanings and differences existing within diverse groups. The incidence of globalisation and technological innovations brought by it has created mixed blessings through opportunities opened for modifications of behavioural patterns and projection of diverse possibilities of elimination, replacement and restructuring within the social context (Andah, 1992:9).

Lending credence to this background, Oloruntimehin (2010:8;17) succinctly described the study of culture as " largely the study of continuities " and advocated for a revision and revival of value systems in Africa to lay a solid foundation for socio-cultural and institutional framework upon which our socio-economic development can be based. This is because real culture refers to the values and norms that

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a society professes to believe ([www.CliffsNotes.com](http://www.CliffsNotes.com)). While culture is believed to accommodate both tangible and intangible aspects of a society, its distinctive contribution can be understood from its peculiarity. Camilleri cited by Babawale(2007) expressed this uniqueness in this extract:

*The peculiarity of a given culture is a function of its distinctiveness as it relates to its impact on the attitudes, aspiration, motivations, representations, skills and behaviour of the people celebrating some and discarding others (2007:9). To this end, the latter attenuates his belief that culture can distil the past to serve as a basis for the present and a guide for the future (Babawale, 2007:9)*

A major segment of traditional African education reflects certain cultural values which include: respect for life, respect for the elderly, honesty, moral uprightness, dignity of labour, sense of belonging, communalism, responsible living among others (Emeka, 2010). These, values, though by no means exhaustive; are very important and are cherished virtues, not only for Nigerians, but Africans in general. Apart from values determined by the society, individual members of the community also pursue or sometimes ignore virtues of integrity, dignity of labour, hard work and enviable personal achievements within the society. This situation reveals an intertwining relationship between values desired by individuals at the micro level and those desired by the society at macro level (Aduradola, 2004). Cultural values, which are of great significance and relevance to this study are the values of sacredness of life, respect for life, authority and elders.

### III. OKADA (COMMERCIAL MOTORCYCLE BUSINESS)

Okada, one of the major means of transportation in Nigeria, refers to commercial motorcycles. The motorcycle riders carry passengers from one place to another for a fee. Okada riding is popular business and it is widely used by members of the public. Its role in the Nigerian society cannot be over- emphasised. Okadas, because of their low cost of purchase, fuel efficiency and ability to travel on roads that (cars) cannot easily go to or places that they cannot get to, have become invaluable in a country that is bedevilled with shortage of taxi cabs, buses, a weak mass-transit system, poor state of the roads and inadequate access roads to rural areas which causes traffic congestion. In particular, various sets of people in the society including, government workers, students, traders and business people find okada business a great relief from the congested traffic situations that are sometimes common sight during the rush hours in the morning and afternoon when schools and offices close.

Unfortunately, the rise of okada commercial enterprise has been accompanied by increased levels of high-risk behaviours and accidents on Nigerian roads. As a result, both the riders and the business have come under heavy attack culminating in legislations restricting or prohibiting their operations in some Nigerian cities. Okadas, like all motorcycles elsewhere, have a far higher rate of causing crippling and fatal accidents per unit of distance than automobiles. Such accidents, Offoaro (2009) aptly stated, are usually caused by the fact that many okada riders are either untrained or unlicensed, while majority do not pay attention to road signs or other motorists on the road. Moreover, some of them operate their business under the influence of alcohol and they carry more than the stipulated number of passengers, while the law enforcement agents sometimes overlook their offences once they have been bribed.

It is a truism that education is dependent on the culture of the society for its content. Thus, it is through the educational process that a man can be equipped to live in his society. However, the process of education can be facilitated largely through the transmission of culture- ethical considerations and moral uprightness. The implication is that a man's level of education will determine how much of societal or cultural values he possesses and manifest. Although the influences and impacts of other agents of socialization cannot be over looked, nevertheless, the place of formal education cannot be undermined. Observation shows that majority of okada riders do not imbibe societal values and this has resulted into their inability to live by and preserve cherished values. The riders are engrossed in their desire for survival in order to make ends meet not minding the process by which they survive. According to Offoaro (2009):

*Okada people have become a constant menace and an embarrassment to civilization and civility. They call car owners names. They use vexatious slang that belongs to the crudest form of social discourse. They are gossip merchants. They are touts atop roving motor cycles...*

This study shares the view of Dollard et al expressed in their frustration- aggression theory which states that frustrations can create aggressive inclinations... (Berkowitz, 1989). Frustration is a state that sets in, if a goal- oriented act is delayed or thwarted. The instigation remains even though the chances of realization are constrained by interfering influences. Under these frustrating conditions, aggressive behaviour is stimulated to an extent that corresponds with the intensity of the instigation and the degree of blockage of goal attainment. Aggression on the other hand can be defined as the deliberate violation of an organism or an organism substitute. It is primarily

directed towards the cause of frustration but may be redirected towards any other people or objects. It can be subsumed from this theoretical base that the Okada riders are significantly frustrated by the harsh economic conditions coupled with the problem of unemployment and corruption. The manifestation of their frustration can only be directed towards other road users, their passengers and the authority in the form of a display of aggressive behaviour like the use of foul languages and other anti- social activities.

#### IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem investigated in this study was the socio – economic challenges that results from the use of okada riding and the undermining of African cultural values by okada riders in Abeokuta and Odeda Local Government Areas of Ogun State, Nigeria. The post colonial era has initiated increasing incidences of socio economic problems like unemployment, juvenile delinquencies, crimes and myriads of other problems as off- shoot of globalisation and advanced technology. With this background, the indigenous philosophy which propels the socialization process of making an individual grow into a responsible adult in the society has been submerged. With the influence of political development and individual participation in the political or electoral process, the significance of survival and accessibility for convenient means of movement (for humans and goods) coupled with the need to face biting economic realities have been established. In the light of these growing concerns and stark realities, the new wave of 'okada riding' can be identified as a communication medium for solving an observable challenge of youth empowerment and economic need for survival.

A fundamental probe into the impact of culture on sustainable development paved way for the necessity of providing an answer to the questions asked by Professor Babawale Tunde in which he stated categorically that "Can we use culture as a stabilizing agent and an effective tool for arresting the tide of poverty, unemployment and misery?" (Babawale, 2007:7). This question opens a discussion for an assessment of the impact of socio-economic survival on African value system.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory identified five levels of human needs. These include: Physiological, Security, Social, Esteem and Self Actualizing needs. The physiological need is at the lowest level and it embraces the needs for survival, which is the most basic and instinctive need in the hierarchy. All other needs are secondary which implies that until the physiological needs are satisfied, the other needs cannot be satisfied (About. com). However, issues of survival of an individual, a community or group of people within the society are germane to the

adherence or abrogation/ erosion of indigenous cultural values upheld from time immemorial.

#### a) Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to examine the effects of socio – economic survival of Okada riders on African cultural values in Abeokuta and Odeda Local Government Areas of Ogun State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives include:

- i. To identify the personal characteristics of Okada riders.
- ii. To examine the influence of 'okada riders' attitude to African moral and cultural values.
- iii. To determine the effect of Okada riding on the educational pursuit of youths and their need for survival.
- iv. To identify the cultural values being affected by the disposition and attitude of okada riders.

#### V. METHODOLOGY

##### a) Research design

This research is a descriptive survey on the effects of socio-economic survival of okada riders on African cultural values among selected okada riders in Abeokuta and Odeda Local Government Areas of Ogun State Nigeria.

##### b) Population and Sampling procedure

The targeted population of the study were the commercial okada riders in Odeda Local Government Area and Abeokuta South Local Government Area respectively. Five okada parks were purposively - selected from the study areas and one hundred (100) okada riders who were randomly- selected from the five parks.

##### c) Research Instrument

The research instrument used was a set of questionnaire divided into two parts. Part one contains the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while part two reflects questions that bother on the ways and manner through which the okada riders carry out their business activities and how it affect societal, cultural values.

##### d) Method of Data Analysis

Simple percentage was used to analyse the data on demographic information, while t-test method was used to test the hypotheses.

## VI. Results and Discussion

## a) Analysis of Data

Table 1 : Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Personal Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1. SEX: Male Female	100 0	100 0
2. AGE: 10-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-Above	15 20 53 09 03	15 20 53 09 03
3. FAMILY BACKGROUND: Polygamy Monogamy	56 44	56 44
4. MARITAL STATUS: Single Married	32 68	32 68
5. RELIGION: Christian Islam Pagan	40 51 09	40 51 09
6. NO. OF DEPENDENTS: 1-3 4-5 5-7 Above the specified.	37 36 15 12	37 36 15 12
7. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL: No formal Education Primary Secondary NCE/OND HND/BSC	30 42 21 06 01	30 42 21 06 01
8. TIME OF OCCUPATION: Full time Part time	69 31	69 31
9. YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: 1-3 4-6 7-9	22 51 27	22 51 27
10. ACCESS TO MOTORCYCLE: Government Loan Hire purchase Shift Self	03 32 43 15 07	03 32 43 15 07

Source : Field Study

**Table 1** revealed that all respondents were males. This implies that okada riding is a male-dominated profession. Furthermore, 20% of them were

between ages 21-30, 53% were between the age of 31-40, 15% were between age 10-20, while only 9% and 3% are between the age of 41 - 50 and 50 – above



respectively. This implies that those involved in the business are from the economically active age, mainly youths and middle-aged men. A higher percentage of respondents (68%) were married, 32% were single; 56% practiced polygamy, while 44% practiced monogamy. Forty percent (40%) of them were Christians, 9% are pagans, while 51% were Muslims. This could account for the percentage of those practising polygamy as against those practising monogamy. Moreover, 37% of the respondents have between 1-3 dependents, while 36% have between 4 and 5 dependents, 15% have between 5-7 dependents, while 12% of them have dependents above the specified number.

In terms of their educational background, 30% of the respondents had no primary school education,

42% had primary education, 21% had secondary education while only 6% had National Certificate in Education / Ordinary National Diploma (NCE/OND) and 1% had Higher National Diploma / Bachelor of Science or Arts (HND/BSC). Majority (69%) of okada riders worked full- time, while 31% claimed to work only on part- time. About half (51%) of them had between 4-6 years experience in the business, 22% claimed to have between 1-3 years of experience, while 27% agreed to have obtained between 7-9 years of experience in the business. Only 3% of the respondents got their motorcycles from the government, 32% purchased theirs through loan, while 43% of them are on hire purchase; 15% work on shift, while 7% of them actually purchased theirs themselves.

**Table 2 :** Responses of okada operators to questions relating to reasons for embarking on the business.

Questions relating to reasons for embarking on the business.	Yes %	No %
1. Do you belong to any association as a result of your profession?	96	04
2. Do you make enough money to sustain your family?	85	15
3. Is Okada business very lucrative?	78	22
4. Does the business afford one of other opportunities?	63	37
5. Are you undergoing any training programme presently?	09	91
6. Is the training related to Okada- riding?	00	100

**Table 2** indicated that 96% of the respondents agreed that they belong to an association, 85% of the respondents agreed that they make enough money to sustain their families, 78% agreed that Okada business was very lucrative; while 63% of them were of the

opinion that the business was flexible and afforded them other opportunities. The implication of this finding is that okada riding is an organised business venture and that majority of the respondents were in the business for socio- economic survival.

**Table 3 :** Responses of Okada operators to Questions relating to safety of okada riding.

Questions relating to safety of okada- riding	Yes%	No%
1. Do you possess any driver's license?	12	88
2. Do you wear helmet while riding your Okada?	28	72
3. Do you have helmet for your passengers?	13	87
4. Have you had any form of accident while riding your okada?	21	79

**Table 3** showed that 88% of the respondents did not obtain driver's license, 72% do not use helmets, while 79% did not have helmets for their passengers. Quite a few of the respondents (21%) agreed to have been involved in one form of accident or the other, while 79% agreed otherwise. The implication of this is that, though they are aware of safety precautions, a sizeable number of them do not adhere to it.

*Table 4 :* Responses of Okada riders to questions relating to language use.

Questions relating to language use.	Yes%	No%
1. Do you have special language/slang you use among yourselves?	78	22
2. Do you use foul and abusive languages?	46	54
3. Do customers complain about your attitudes?	56	44
4. Do you use foul languages on traffic users?	63	37
5. Do you use foul languages on traffic officials?	33	67
6. Do you use foul languages on your passengers?	72	28
7. Does your Association emphasize respect in your operations?	68	32
8. Is it possible for you to refrain from the use of foul languages?	65	35

**Table 4** revealed, that about 78% of the respondents agreed that they have special language they use among themselves, 63% used foul and abusive languages on other road users, while 33% use foul language on their passengers. Furthermore, 72% of okada riders agreed that their association emphasized that they should have respect and good human relations with their passengers and other road users as virtues entrenched in their code of conduct.

However, 68% of them agreed that it is possible to refrain from the use of foul languages, while 32% agreed otherwise. This finding indicated that majority of the respondents showed disrespect to other people and to constituted authority as they refused to obey their Association's order to have respect and good human relationships with other road users and their passengers.

*Table 5 :* Responses of Okada riders to questions relating to social attitudes.

Questions relating to respondents social attitudes	Yes%	No%
1. Do you drink alcohol?	61	39
2. Do you drink during business hours?	28	72
3. Do you smoke?	43	57
4. If yes, does it affect your relationship with your passengers?	22	78
5. Is there any drinking spot around your garage?	48	52

**Table 5** showed that 61% of the respondents take alcohol, 28% of them even agreed to taking alcohol during business hours, 43% of them smoke, while 22%

agreed that drinking of alcohol affects their relationship with their passengers.

*Table 6 :* T-test Analysis of Hypotheses.

HYPOTHESES	t critical	t value	Decision
1. There is no significant relationship between commercial okada riders and moral /cultural values.	1.860	0.187	Rejected
2. There is no significant relationship between okada riding and educational pursuit.	1.812	0.0017	Rejected
3. There is no significant relationship between okada riders and their level of education.	1.812	0.142	Rejected
4. There is significant relationship between okada riders and respect for human life and good human relations.	1.859	5.186	Accept

## VII. Results of T-Test Analysis

Table 6 revealed that all the null hypotheses were rejected indicating that there were significant relationship between okada riders and moral/ cultural values, educational pursuit, their level of education and respect for human life and good human relations. By implication, the study showed that the attitudes of commercial okada riders did not portray any respect for African morals and cultural values. Okada riding negatively affect the educational level and pursuit of the respondents. Furthermore, the hypothesis that the major cultural values that are being affected are the respect for human life and sense of good human relations is accepted as t-value gave 5.186 with t-critical 1.859 at 0.05 level of probability. The implication of this is that, there is a significant relationship between okada riding and respect for human lives and sense of good human relations.

## VII. Discussion of Findings

One of the findings of this study was that okada riding is an organised business venture and that majority of the respondents were in the business for socio-economic survival. In fact most of them were so desperate to the point of obtaining their okada from loans or hire purchase. This is in line with Abraham Maslow Hierarchy of Needs Theory which identified the needs for survival as the most basic and instinctive need in the hierarchy.

Findings further revealed that Okada riders' attitude did not portray African cultural and moral values. This was seen in their use of foul and abusive languages on other road users not minding their age and status and their outright disobedience to their Association's constitution. These attitudes negate the much cherished African cultural and moral values. This finding further lends credence to Offoaro's (2009) assertion earlier quoted in this study. A probable explanation for the use of foul languages and the riders' disrespect for social values and authority could be found in the frustration – aggression theory of social conflict. The harsh economic realities/ conditions coupled with the problem of unemployment and the need to survive were enough reasons to cause frustration and trigger aggression which is manifested in the use of foul and abusive languages, show off disrespect and disobedience to authority. Furthermore, the use of alcohol by many of the riders even during business hours could account for another reason for their rude or disrespectful behaviour. Proximity of their garages to alcohol sellers or drinking spots might be responsible for their drinking habits, which eventually influence their behaviour negatively.

Findings further showed that most of the riders had little or no formal education. The implication is that okada riding serves as a distraction for youths from their

educational pursuits. Most of them accepted that the business is lucrative and as such, they see it as a quick way of making money for survival rather than wasting their time going to school or pursuing education/ training.

## VIII. Conclusion

The findings of this research, has shown that Okada riding, though a lucrative enterprise has its direct and indirect bearing on the cultural values of the society. Okada riding as a profession involves everyday interaction with other road users, passengers and the society at large. The recklessness that is associated with the business tends to erode certain cultural values including respect for life, authority and elders within their immediate environment.

Furthermore, it has also revealed that while attitudes of okada riders affect moral and cultural values, it also affects educational pursuit of the riders. The business however, preaches sacred respect for human lives and also respect for the association's constitution. It can also be further established that majority of the riders engage in the business because of the pressing need to survive and sustain their families. However, it was revealed that most of the riders did not take to necessary safety precautions. Thus, they are perceived as being reckless. Moreover, most hospitals in Nigeria have several reported cases of accidents caused by okada business.

On the use of language by okada riders, it has been established that the profession is identified with vexations and foul language usage, which affect other road users and they cause unnecessary traffic nuisance. Apart from this, most of the riders drink alcohol even during business hours and this has been identified as the major cause of their recklessness.

## IX. Recommendations

1. Citizenship education should be incorporated into vocational training programmes, empowerment seminars or youth empowerment training for new entrants, unemployed youths and school leavers. Other educational training programmes should be based on skill acquisition, exposure to cultural values and ethical responsibilities. Training materials should be developed in the areas of riding skills, ethical communication skills, safety tips, professional/ occupational ethics, highway codes, sanctions and so on. There must also be insistence on certificated training before riding permit is issued to potential riders.
2. Establishment of monitoring units to perform surveillance function. Mobile courts may be set up to arrest and try erring okada riders or impose sanctions to enforce strict compliance.



3. Communication strategies should be employed to create awareness or public enlightenment campaigns through the Mass media and public orientation activities through paid advertisements/ announcements, songs, jingles, drama or use of pictures displaying societal expectations, cultural values, importance of education/ training and safety instructions for okada riders and users.
4. Use of stickers, handbills and bill-boards or outdoor adverts should be adopted to communicate safety messages to members of the public.
5. Registration of okada riders on zonal and state basis and the issuance of rider's permit will go a long way to curb the menace and institute control mechanism on the riders.

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