

Women Participation in Household Automobile Decision Making in a Developing Economy-Nigeria

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Abstract: Women make up an increasing share of the labour force in almost all the regions of the world. Despite their reproductive and home management role, they experience continuous decline or discrimination in decisions making process. This behavioural pattern have resultantly fuel the widespread of poverty among women world-wide. This tend has implications especially on planning requiring accurate interpretation of specific needs and wants of women in the society. Transportation for women is one of the most important yet unappreciated issues confronting most households and the society as a whole. The tenet of this study is to examine the roles of the various decision-making in household private automobile acquisition decision-making. A total of 1500 respondents from a cross-sectional survey in Lagos, Nigeria, shows male dominance in decision-making. Joint decision between both parties (husband and wife) is also significant. Apart from economic status, the local customs and discriminating legal institutions are important factors that make a woman to participate more or less in private vehicle acquisition decision in the household. Empirical findings reveals that, women's socio-economic profile or background negatively impacts their ability to participate and be involved in household automobile acquisition's decision making.

Key words: Household, automobile, decision, travel, participation and patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

There is nothing novel in stating that vehicle acquisition decision-making is crucial to sustainance of households. This stemmed on the pivotal role of transport to provide links between homes, jobs and enhances social lives. In other words, mobility and travel are essential in fulfilling the role play by every member of an household. Household location income, size and a host of other factors are important determinants of the travel pattern or behaviour of the household members. The decision on what type and when to acquire or purchase an household automobile still remain one of the disturbing decision issues in most households in Nigerian cities.

It should be mentioned that, the standard of living and security of an households, depends not only on current income, but also on the stock of assets, including the social and human capital, as well as the money and physical assets, at the disposal of the household (World Bank, 2001). Therefore, the burden of transport on household budgets is significant in most developing countries. For instance, transport is said to accounts for between 8 and 16% of household expenditures in a range of developing countries in Africa (Goddard and Diaz, 2000). The impact of poor initial choice or decisions

on household automobile in most African households have force many households into poverty. In other words, the choice of a vehicle or automobile is a germane decision for an household and there are considerable financial and psychological implications for an unsatisfactory choice.

Based on the fact that, households' automobile choice grossly affects every member of the household; makes it necessary for an effective involvement of every member of the household in the choice of a cost-effective automobile. In most developing countries however, many activities typically undertaken by women (childcare, household management, informal sector employment and so on) and the poor state of public transport; compelled them to depend on private automobile and makes more frequent and shorter trips than the men (Hanson and Hanson, 1980; Odufuwa, 2005, 2006). Meanwhile, studies over the years shows that, in car-owing households, males often use it more (Peters, 1999). This is however, traceable to the traditional views on gender roles which imposes limits to the financial decision-making power of the wives (Lundberg and Polak, 1996).

Partly because of this fact and the prominent nature of transportation system in the cities of developing countries that compelled most users to difficulties and

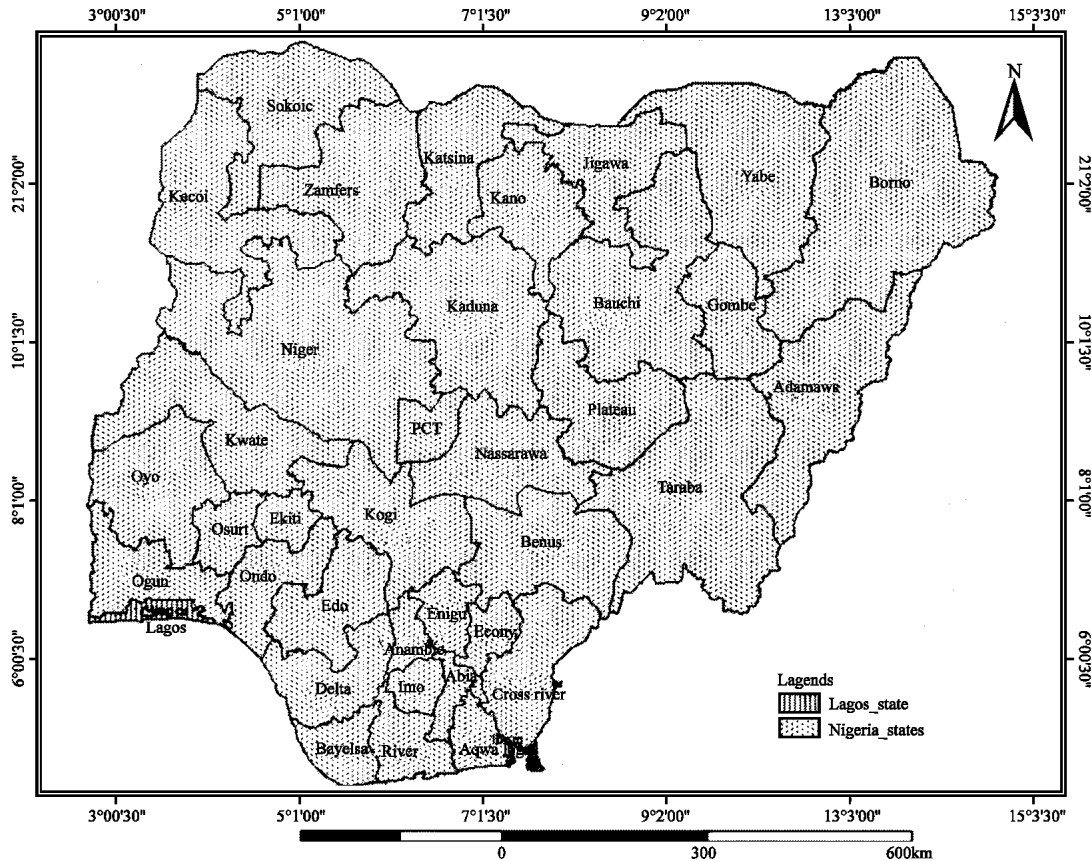


Fig. 1: Map of Nigeria showing Lagos States

expensive livelihood, women are therefore the most affected by the household automobile choice. In actual fact, gender analysis of travel needs of women and their participation in decision making process; will allow them to define their mobility needs and interest. Study of this kind is therefore important simply because, to date; academic research work have largely neglected the specific mobility needs of women, even as a group, they often have the worst travel profiles and the poorest access to improved transport services among their respective national populations.

To this end and based on this backdrop, this study spark more discussions on the ways and needs to effectively allow the participation of women in household automobile acquisition decision making. It identified inequalities in decision making and addresses the issue with the notion of curbing gender disparities in decision making process. The study explicitly established the reasons for the choice of vehicle and the decision makers and how the choice of vehicle affects the key household roles play by women. It is however, anticipated that, data presented will be useful to policy makers in formulating and implementing policies that will enhance the mobility needs of the women.

Locale of the study: Lagos state was created in 1967 and is the largest metropolitan area in Nigeria (Ayeni, 1979). It is located on the south-western part of Nigeria, with a coverage area of 335,000 ha (3,350sq.km) (Fig. 1). Lagos metropolis lies generally on low lands, with about 17,500 ha of built-up area of which residential areas occupy the single largest proportion of 8,939 ha (51.9%), commercial 821 ha (4.8%), industrial, 1,444 ha (8.4%) institutional and special use 2,366 ha (13.7%) open spaces 453 (2.6%) and transportation 3,205 (18.6%) (Oduwaye, 2005). The state has a population of more than 12million, with a very rapid growth rate. Based on the United Nations population projection, Lagos is expected to be the second most populated city by the year 2015 with population size of about 25million.

Is worth mentioning that, the population characteristics of the state is heterogeneous with most parts of the nation being represented. Despite the relocation of the Nigerian Federal Capital to Abuja, Lagos still remains strongly the commercial capital of Nigeria. It harbours almost all the headquarters of the multinational companies in the country.

Traditional travel analysis places great reliance on “income” as a predictor of behaviour and particularly the

use of private car. Research has recently focused on the household as the appropriate level of travel decisions analysis (Rosenbloom, 1980). Urban mobility theories argue that the determinants of household automobile choice centres on; household income, size, types, status and the travel pattern of household members. In other words, household travel behavioural patterns are the reflection of complex interactions of internal and external conditions, cognitive and emotional factors, perceptions, evaluations, social pressures, cultural images, physical environments and economic condition (Gordon *et al.*, 1989). These factors obviously varies in trend and fashion across the global urban space (Alonso, 1964; Kain, 1968; Muth, 1969; Horton *et al.*, 1971). Available empirical findings affirmed that, people's choices are based on needs of immediate survival as well as inspired by the need for social acceptance and images of desired identities (Linden, 1999; Hemmati and CSDNGO, 2000).

The household that makes automobile acquisition decision comprises of members with varying intrinsic characteristics that are expected to behave as a single entity. Studies have shown that, members of the household have their preferences (Olatubara, 2003; Firat, 1994). It is however interesting to note that, the altruistic models and the cooperative bargaining models were explicitly used to explain the household decision making process in this study.

Altruistic models are viewed as models in which family decisions are represented by a single utility-maximizing agent (household head) operating subject to a family budget constraint (McElroy, 1992; Olatubara, 2003). In this "non-cooperative" game-theoretic model, members take decisions separately and control separate sets of resources (Ulph, 1988); this implies that, each family member may act independently, thus; resulting to conflicts of interest in the family. These conflicts courtesy self-interest; must be resolved by an altruistic head that makes decisions based on what is best for the household as a whole (Hoddinott, 1992).

On the other hand, household decision making function is generally more complex in the cooperative bargaining models. This is simply because, it reflects and allows the consideration or inputs of the needs or preferences and influences of every member of the household (McElroy, 1992). In this "cooperative" game-theoretic model, household members are assumed to make decisions over resource allocation jointly and pool their resources (McElroy and Horney, 1981). For instance, women tempt to have different travel needs deriving from the multiple tasks they must perform in their households and their communities (Grieco and Turner, 1997; Hamilton, 2000); view the model as an avenue that allows equal opportunity for them as a member of the household to

partake in the decision making. Dissimilarities in preferences among household members are however; resolved by bargaining process that generates an agreed, self-enforcing utility function (Olatubara, 2003). Despite the likelihood or possibilities of cooperative conflict (Hoddinott, 1992); the individual strength of bargaining determines how the household decisions are made. It should be noted that, benefits disparities is also a function of the perceived contribution of those bargaining. The individual perceived, as making the larger contribution can expect to obtain an outcome more favourable to him or her (Hoddinott, 1992). Empirical evidence according to McElroy (1992) affirmed that; cooperative bargaining rather than altruism is more dominant force in family decision.

A definite gender divide however, emerged between men and women's household decisions. Women worldwide faces discrimination or exclusion in household and societal decision-making (Olatubara, 2003; Aderinto, 2001; Polk, 2001). This subordination of women is more pronounced in developing countries. It has long be affirmed by scholars (Kenig, 1996; Adeyeye, 1988; Howard 1985; Odufuwa, 2001; Kumar, 1993); that women are discriminated against in terms of employment opportunities, access to social and productive resources, education, health status and family decisions. This gives an insight into why poverty is so common among women; with more than 70% of the world's poor constituting the women (Pyke, 2003; Jaiyebo, 2003). It is therefore, worth mentioning that, gender is one of the primary axes around which social life is organised and plays a central role along with culture, age and socio-economic status in determining men and women's social status and access to resources (Alcock, 2001; Hughes, 2004). It should however be noted that women being in charge of child care and the well being of the households makes the vast majority of household trips for the purpose of shopping, taking children to school, doctors and childcare (Jeff and McElroy, 1980; Figueroa, 1998). They however, spend more time than men on transport activities particularly in developing countries. With the widely recognised improvement in mobility of many households in recent times; due largely to increased car ownership; it is highly disturbing particularly in developing countries, that; there is a great difference between the level of access to a car by women and men. Even in households with a car and apart from not available to the majority of women for use during the day (WGSG, 1984), they markedly have less access to transport resources commanded by the family (Figueroa, 1998; Rosenbloom, 1980; Oyesiku and Odufuwa, 2002). This is partly justified by study in Nairobi-Kenya that, while 24% of male heads of households used a car, only 9% of women heads did (Peters, 1999).

It should however, be understood that, the increasing discrimination against women in household decision-making is traceable to the theory of patriarchy. This theory affords women little or no resource control or decision-making rights. The concept has long been used to explain why sex (a biological fact) becomes gender (a social phenomenon) (Millett, 1971; Hughes, 2004). Patriarchy is viewed as a set of social relations between men which, although hierarchical, establishes an interdependence and solidarity between them which allows them to dominate women (WGS, 1984). Is a form of social organisation in which the man has absolute control over his wife. Thus, male's needs and desires often set the agenda in all spheres. Discrimination against women in decision-making in almost all matters has become a common norm in the society. In other words, there are no societies in the world where men do not discriminate against women in the realm of decision-making. This is often compounded by culture, marriage laws and practices (Tsikata, 1995; Macoloo, 1990). Women are generally regarded as the home-builders and managers, as well as, a resource and source of sustainable livelihood, but, the continuous discrimination against this valuable resource; may resultantly affect the general well being of the households and the society as a whole. Thus a gender- based analysis of household transportation issues established the need for balance of power between women and men and how this affects their physical and mobility profiles. A gender analysis of this type, draws out the ways by which women and men's traditional roles and relationships impact their ability to attain sustainable livelihoods.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This shows that Lagos metropolis consists of high, medium and low density residential neighbourhoods. The study however used a cross-sectional survey method of randomly selected 15 residential districts in Lagos-Nigeria. Based on population size, 100 questionnaires were administered to each residential district. A total of 1500 questionnaires were systematically administered in the selected households. It should be noted that, the selection of the households covered by the questionnaires was done by random and systematic sampling techniques in the Lagos metropolis. The reliability of the research instrument was conducted using test-retest method and this gave a reliability coefficient of (r) = 0.82.

In each household, the target population was women of different occupations and not below the age of 20 years. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part one probed into the background of each woman such as age, educational qualification, occupation, monthly income and household type. The second part consists of some variables on travel decisions-mode of travel, number of household vehicles, driving status, number of trips, transport cost, travel distance and difficulties. The final part was based on decision-making in the household-who decides the choice of vehicle, what influence decision-making and the implication of both a "normally" distributed and "skewed" decision-making in the household.

The simple proportions, percentages and cross tabulation of key variables were done to analysed the data. The product moment correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between socio-economic variables of women and their involvement in private automobile acquisition decision making in the household.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A major criterion of an "ill-free" household is the effective decision-making process that gives room for every household member to participate in decisions that affect every members of the household. The household is aptly viewed by Ellis (1998) as a social unit characterised by the sharing of the same dwelling house, with incomes that are pooled together for common use. In other words, an household is made up of members that have their individual tastes, values and preferences in the choice of household resources or property in the society as it affects their effective livelihoods. It is however, a crucial aspect that showcase the environment of household's members travel pattern.

In this study, about 69.47 and 28.73% of the survey households have 1-2 and 3-4 vehicles, respectively (Table 1). It is however, surprising and confirmed by earlier studies (Peters, 1999; SMILE, 2004; Sarmiento, 1980; Hughes, 2004) that, women have little or no access to household's vehicles. As shown in Table 1, about 35.53% of the respondents have access to utilize the available household vehicles. This is however shocking; based on the fact that more than 70% of the women sampled have the ability to drive and own a driving license and yet have little or no access to household vehicle. The implication of their lack of access to private automobile in the light of their complex trip chains -chains of trip more than one or chains between two anchors-home and work (Al-kazily *et al.*, 1994), as

Table 1: Travelling profile

No. of household vehicles	(%)
1-2	69.47
3-4	28.73
>5	1.8
Access to household vehicles	
Yes	64.47
No	35.53
Driving staus/ability	
Can drive	75.47
Cannot drive	24.53
Daily transport cost	
< N200	24.27
N200-N300	64.73
N300-N400	11.00
Number of daily trips	
A trip per day	2.53
2 trips per day	8.47
3 trips per day	62.73
4 trips per day	25.40
>5 trips per day	0.87

Source: Author's field survey

Table 2: Decision makers on the choice of vehicle

Decision makers	(%)
Husband	58.80
Wife	1.13
Husband and self	34.93
Husband and other wives	4.87
Relations / friends	0.27

Source: Author's field survey

Table 3: Relationship between socio-economic background of wife and their involvement in private automobile acquisition decision making

Variables	R	P	Decision(s)
Educational level	-0.14	0.05	Significant
Income	0.15	0.01	Significant
Age	0.02	0	Significant
Occupational status	0.19	0	Significant
Household type	0.13	0.02	Significant

Tested at 0.05 level of significance, Source: Author's field survey

Table 4: Reasons for choice of vehicle

Reasons	(%)
Cost of vehicle	22.73
Durability/cost of maintenance	4.20
Social status of household	13.80
Husband's decision	21.40
Travel; frequency	0.87
Travel distance	5.27
Societal security level	18.27
Effectiveness of public transport	8.87
Household size	3.53
Others	1.06

Source: Author's field survey

revealed in Table 1; is the expensive daily travel cost and insecure travel environment. It should be noted that more than 60% of the women spend between N200-N300 for their daily intra-city travel. While a bit above 10% spends more than N300 on daily trips.

As many women need to juggle a range of responsibilities especially during the day, they tend to make interconnected decisions in order to effectively carry out their employment responsibilities along with other obligations. Based on this fact and a host of others, decision making in respect of private automobile is a vital

issue of women transportation needs. As revealed in Table 2, two groups of decision makers stand out clearly. These are the households in which the choice or acquisition of private automobile was solely made by the husband and it accounts for almost three-fifths (58.8%) of all households. This is however, closely followed by the households in which joint decisions are made by both husband and the respondent (wife). This accounts for a little above two-fifths (34.93%). Less than 2% of all households' decision on the acquisition of private automobile was made by the wife; while the husband and other wives most especially in an extended household type account for about 4.87%. It is also worth noting that, the role of friends and relatives accounts for less than 1%.

It is obvious from the above findings that, an excessive dominance of the husband in the decision-making on private household automobile is more prominent. Meanwhile, fewer than half of all households are engage in mutual discussions and agreement on this very pertinent discourse. Interestingly, empirically tested hypothesis emphasised or shows that, there is significant relationship between the socio-economic background of the respondents (wife) and their involvement in private automobile decision making (Table 3). This implies that the participation of women in private automobile acquisition is a factor of their level of education, age, occupation, monthly income and the household type.

It is worth mentioning that, several factors determines the choice of automobile apart from the household income. As revealed in Table 4; the cost of vehicle is the most significant (22.73) factor for the choice of private automobile. This is closely followed by the personal preference or taste of the husband (21.40%). Nevertheless, the social status of the household, the travel pattern (distance and frequency), household size and societal safety level are notable factors that determine the choice of household private automobile.

It is noteworthy, that the travel satisfaction of the respondents is highly poor, based on the fact that, most women are exposed to different travel externalities in the process of travelling by the ill-public transport means and as well they are grossly affected by the solely decision of the husband in the acquisition of private automobile. Apart from the very few that sees the acquired vehicle(s) as luxury, many households with the wrong choice of automobile acquisition faces an epileptic household livelihood.

CONCLUSION

Household automobile acquisition decisions will over the time continue to be a significant discourse among academicians. The appropriate choice of private household automobile is important simply because it

affects the travel pattern of members of the household. In other words, the circumstances of other household members and particularly their responsibilities affect one's travel pattern or choices. Based on this premise, it is pertinent that an "all-involved" decision-making mechanism should be accorded in different households to allow the views and preferences of all household members in the household automobile acquisition decision.

This study has explicitly examined the level of involvement of various decision-makers especially the women in the acquisition of private household automobiles. From the findings however, it is obvious that, the husband is the sole decision maker in the acquisition of private automobiles in the households. However, a notable fraction of households (about 34%) are noted for joint decisions between husband and wife. Despite the fact that an ill-free household is a reflection of effective decision-making, socio-economic background of most women is a significant factor that determines their involvement or participation in household automobile acquisition decision making. Thus, as transportation affects almost every aspect of our daily lives, it is becoming increasingly difficult for most women to travel conveniently living available public transport in the light of existing private household automobile which they have little or no access to. It however implies that, the economic wherewithal of the wife stands as a prominent variable that enhances the involvement or participation of women in household automobile acquisition decision-making.

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