

The Influence of Passenger's Behavior on Road Traffic Law Enforcement in Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract: This research examined the influence of passenger's behavior on drivers and road traffic law enforcement agencies in Abuja, Nigeria. The research made use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data was sourced from structured and open ended questionnaires, observations and direct interviews while the secondary data was obtained from relevant published materials. A total of 685 questionnaires were administered to both passengers and drivers using purposive sampling technique in selected motor parks in the study area. A second and third set of questionnaires geared towards assessing the automotive knowledge of respondents and driver's performance and responsibility were administered to both groups, respectively. Results obtained shows that 50% of the respondents were aged 26-40 years while 53.3% did not own vehicles of their own. About 59 and 52%, respectively claimed they have been involved in one form of accident or the other and that they sometimes engage drivers in conversation while they are driving. Analysis of driver's performance and responsibility shows that 53% said they have been driving for between 11-20 years and have not been arrested for traffic offence. Majority of drivers (66%) agreed that passengers tend to distract them while driving and that the nature of the distraction ranges between noise making (35%), criticizing driving style (23%) and complain about vehicle conditions (42%). A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted with officers of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) lend credence to most of the research findings. Based on the research findings, it is recommended that there is the need to promulgate a law that provides punishment to erring passengers as all the existing laws seem to focus only on drivers.

Key words: Passengers, drivers, distraction, law enforcement, vehicle and crashes, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The transport sector is crucial in sustainability and economic development of any nation whether developed or developing. This can easily be confirmed by the fact that apart from generating numerous employment opportunities for the teeming population of the world, it is also fast transforming the world into one big global village. The rapid urbanization process and the insatiable need for the exchange of goods and services have also made transportation an indispensable aspect of any modern city.

However in spite of the enormous contribution of transportation to mankind, it has been identified as fast becoming a major cause of carnage to human lives world over. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that 1.2 million people were killed globally (representing 2.2% of all deaths) and 50 million more were injured in motor vehicle collisions. Due to the global and massive scale of the issue, the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies have passed resolutions and held international conferences to alert member states on the issue. The first United Nations General Assembly resolution and debate was in 2003 while the "World Day of Remembrance for

Road Traffic Victims" was declared in 2005. In 2009, the first high level ministerial conference on road safety was held in Moscow. In its Global Status Report on Road Safety, 2009, the World Health Organization states that over 90% of the world's fatalities on the roads occur in low-income and middle-income countries which have only 48% of the world's registered vehicles and predicts that road traffic injuries will rise to become the 5th leading cause of death by 2030. Indeed, the World Health Organisation (WHO) had also predicted that by the year 2020, road traffic deaths and injuries will exceed HIV/AIDS as a burden of death and disability. Pierce and Maunder (Komba, 2006) identified 6 reasons for increase in road accidents in developing countries to include:

- Rapid urbanization process
- High growth rates of traffic
- Poor road conditions
- Reckless driving
- Non-adherence to the traffic regulations by the motorist and the traffic officers
- Overdependence on public transport for daily movement

Researches in various possible causes of accidents abound in the literature. Inclusive are fatigue (Zhang *et al.*, 1998), alcoholic influence (Violant and Marshall, 1996; Robertson, 1996; Kayombo, 1995), lack of proper training (Asongwa, 1992), drivers reaction time, speed of vehicle and quality of tyres (Leeming, 1969), medical conditions (Odero *et al.*, 1997; Redelmaier and Tibshirani, 1997; Lave *et al.*, 1993), age of driver (Bjornskau and Gafni, 2000; Robertson, 1996; Graham, 1993) and gender of companion. A recent study shows that the three leading nations with the highest per capita of fatal Road Traffic Accidents (RTA) in the world are Eritrea, Cook Island and Libya (Bodalal *et al.*, 2012). Even though, there seem to be a consensus on the importance of human factor in traffic safety, the studies have largely been directed at the drivers, riders and pedestrians neglecting the role of passengers in road collisions. Yet, the passengers are often more in number than the driver and sometimes constitute a pressure group to influence the way a driver reacts to situations. More often than not, fare-paying passengers have the impression of being the employers of the driver hence they expect some level of obedience from him. This research, therefore aims at examining the influence of the behavior of passengers on the attitudes of drivers in obeying road traffic laws (and the effect of their obedience or disobedience) in Abuja, Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study area: Abuja, the newly developed federal capital city of Nigeria is centrally located in the country over a land area of 8,000 km² (Fig. 1). It is bounded in the North by Kaduna State, in the West by Niger State in the East and South-East by Plateau State and in the South-West by Kogi State. Its geographic coordinates are latitude 7°25' N and 9°20' North of the equator and longitude 5°45' and 7°39' East of the greenwich meridian. There are four major roads leading into the federal capital territory, these are Koton Karfe-Abuja (150 km), Kaduna-Abuja (180 km), Minna-Abuja (112 km) and Keffi-Abuja (54 km) (Fig. 2).

The climate of Abuja is characterized by two distinct seasons, wet and dry. The wet season spans a period of 7 months (April to October) while the dry season last about 5 months (November to March). Between November and February, a dry cold dusty wind (Harmattan) that originates over the Sahara desert dominates the entire study area. Mean annual rainfall stands at 1350 mm with highest down pour occurring in August. Temperatures are generally high through out the year with mean value of 27°C (Binbol and Uzochukwu, 2007).

Data sources: The research made used of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was generated with the use of questionnaire. Questions were both structured and

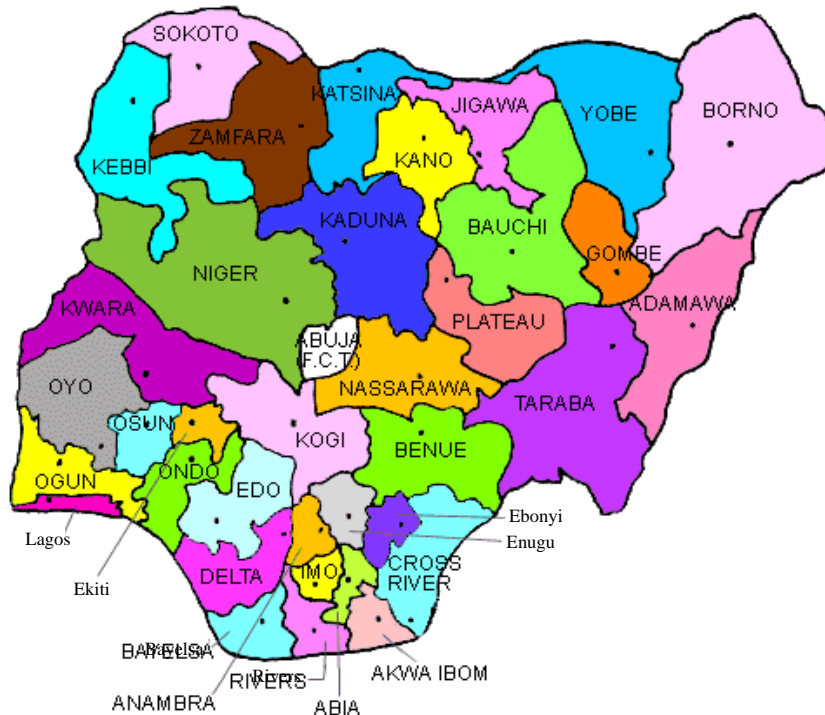


Fig. 1: Map of Nigeria showing the states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

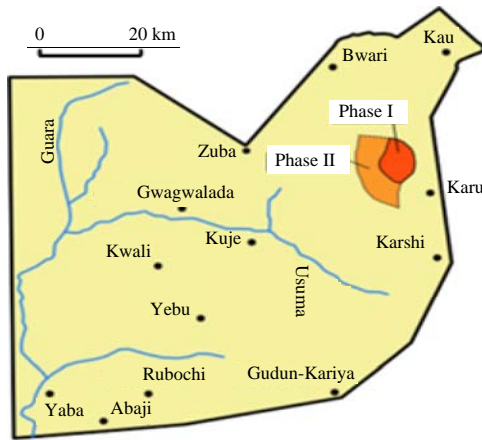


Fig. 2: Map of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

unstructured so that it can capture precise information required as well as enable the respondent to give his opinion. Oral interview was also conducted with passengers, drivers and federal road safety corps officials in Abuja. The questionnaires were prepared for two categories of respondents; namely, drivers (both private and commercial) and passengers (both fare paying and non-fare paying). Secondary, data consist of documented materials abstracted from print and electronic media and the office of the federal road safety corps. Questionnaires were administered using the purposive sampling technique. The choice of this technique is necessary because the questionnaire and interviews are targeted at specific group of people found in the following selected locations:

- Drivers at Jabi Main Motor Park Abuja
- Drivers of private transport companies in Utako District of Abuja
- Boarded passengers going on inter-state trips at Jabi main Motor Park

A focus group discussion was also undertaken with law enforcement agency, particularly the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) in order to obtain an expert opinion and to corroborate the response of the respondents.

Data analysis: The research made used of simple descriptive statistics in the form of mean, percentage scores and standard deviations to present findings. It also employed the use of tables, charts and graphs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents: The result of the analysis of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is presented in Table 1. This study

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Class	Response	Percentage
Age	10-17	25	3.70
	18-25	293	42.80
	26-40	342	50.00
	41-60	23	3.30
	61 and above	02	0.17
Educational status	Primary	128	19.00
	Secondary	300	44.00
	Tertiary	157	23.00
	Non formal	100	14.00
	Others	00	0.00
Marital status	Single	337	49.00
	Married	204	30.00
	Divorced	52	8.00
	Widow(er)	92	13.00
	Vehicle ownership	Yes	320
	No	365	53.00
Type of vehicle	Car	168	24.00
	Bus	381	56.00
	Lorry	98	14.00
	Trailer/tanker	38	6.00
	Purpose of acquiring vehicle	Commercial	256
	Private	429	63.00
Ability to drive	Yes	425	66.00
	No	233	34.00
Class of driver license	Non	202	29.00
	Class E	183	27.00
	Class A	300	44.00

captures the responses of both passengers and the drivers. Out of a total of 800 questionnaires administered, only 685 were retrieved and analyzed. Results from Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents are within the age grade 26-40 constituting 50%. This is closely followed by another youth grade (18-25 years) with 42.8%. This clearly shows that majority of the respondents are youths who are strong and active, commuting in search of jobs or fun. The aged (61 years and above) are sparsely represented in the study. In terms of educational status, the result shows that 44% of the respondents possess secondary school education and 23% are graduates of tertiary institutions. In the same vein, respondents' marital status shows that 49% are single. This could be attributable to the fact that since about 67% possess secondary and tertiary qualification, they would not be in a hurry to go into marital union without job and financial backing. The 30% are, however married.

Majority of respondents (53%) attested to the fact that they do not own vehicles. And for those who own vehicles, about 56% are busses which are the predominant vehicle types used for transportation in the study area. On the purpose for which the owners intend to use their vehicles, surprisingly, only 39% admitted using them for commercial purposes. Similarly, majority (66%) agreed they could drive and 44% possess the class E driving license which permits a holder to drive all vehicle types for both personal and commercial purpose.

Automobile knowledge assessment of respondents: Here, attempt was made to assess and quantify the respondents knowledge on automobile and their attitude towards both drivers and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA). Result obtained is presented in Table 2. Findings in Table 2, reveal that 46% of respondents claimed that they do observe functional speedometers in the vehicles they board for journeys. However, 28% are of the contrary opinion while 26% said they do not have time for such observations. On the issue of speed limit observed by drivers, about 40% of the respondents maintain that the drivers move within a speed limit of 100-120 km h⁻¹. Another 36.5% of the respondents are of the view that the drivers speed above 120 km h⁻¹. It should however, be noted that the regulatory speed limit allowed in Nigeria are 90 km h⁻¹ for commercial vehicles and 100 km h⁻¹ for private vehicles. Results in Table 2 also shows that the

saloon and luxury busses are rather becoming old fashion as 35% of respondents indicated preference of vehicle type to the fashionable mini bus and station wagons (24%). A greater number of the respondents (402) constituting 59% agreed that they have been involved in one form of road traffic accident or the other.

When asked if the presence of law enforcement agencies like federal road safety corps and Nigeria police force help to reduce the rate of road traffic accidents on the highways, most respondents answer in the affirmative (54%). A further probe as to whether the passengers help to plead on behalf of drivers when accosted by law enforcement agents for driving offences. About 40% said they have never done that while 38% said sometimes they plead for the driver to save their time. Only a minute, 12% of the respondent agreed that they plead for the driver all the time as a way of helping him from extortion by the law enforcement agents. This little group further claim that once the law enforcement agents stop a driver, they must try to find fault with him or the vehicle thereby taking much of their time.

When asked if passengers always write down their names in the manifest, responses were quite varied. Only 18% said they make sure that they write their names all the time, 35% said they do write sometimes while 26% claim they do not. The need to write down passengers name in the manifest is very important because it serves as a means of identification in the event of any road mishap. Research findings also reveal that passengers are

Table 2: Automobile knowledge assessment of respondent

Variables	Class	Response	Percentage
Observed functional speedometer?	Yes	316	46
	No	189	28
	Do not know	180	26
Speed limit maintained by drivers (km h ⁻¹)	50-69	0	0
	70-99	159	24
	100-120	276	40
	≥ 121	250	36
Type of vehicle preferred	Saloon car	59	9
	Station wagon	161	24
	Mini bus	243	35
	Luxury bus	150	22
	Indifferent	72	10
Any history of road traffic accident?	Yes	402	59
	No	283	41
Does presence of law Enforcement agent reduce rate of RTA on highway	Yes	371	54
	No	314	46
Do you plead with L.E.A for drivers	All the time	82	12
	Sometimes	262	38
	Rarely	67	10
	Never	274	40
	Corrective	307	45
Impact of LEA on drivers	Punitive	378	55
	All the times	126	18
Do fill the passengers manifest?	Sometimes	239	35
	Rarely	141	21
	Never	179	26
	Motor pack	251	36
Preferred place of boarding vehicle	Road side	231	34
	Both	203	30
	All the time	63	9
Do you engage drivers in discussion?	Sometimes	357	52
	Rarely	95	14
	Never	170	25
	Caution him	315	46
Your reaction if driver is speeding	Keep quite	102	15
	Hail him	0	0
	Report L.E.A	267	39
	All the time	121	18
Seat belt usage?	Sometimes	389	57
	Rarely	100	14
	Never	75	11

Table 3: Assessment of driver's performance and responsibility

Variables	Class	Response	Percentage
Duration of driving (years)	1-5	30	17
	6-10	35	19
	11-20	95	53
	>20	20	11
Any arrest for traffic accident?	Yes	81	45
	No	99	55
If yes, nature of accident	Minor	86	48
	Serious	59	33
	Fatal	35	19
Do passengers distract you when driving	Yes	119	66
	No	61	34
Nature of distraction	Noise making	63	35
	Criticized my driving	41	23
	Complain (Veh. Cond.)	76	42
Do passengers encourage you to speed?	Yes	130	72
	No	50	28
Do passengers caution you on speed?	Yes	92	51
	No	88	49
How do passengers react when Law Enforcement Agencies (L.E.A) stop you for routine checks	Keep quite	40	22
	Plead on my behalf	74	41
	Condemn the L.E.A	39	22
Passengers age grade considered most difficult (years)	Negative instigations	27	15
	10-18	85	47
Passengers age grade considered most difficult (years)	19-35	52	29
	36-50	25	14
	>50	18	10

indifferent as to where they board vehicles. It is equally important that passengers board vehicles at designated motor parks for security reasons. Analysis of responses showed that 36, 34 and 30% board vehicles at motor parks, road side or both, respectively. Majority of respondents (52%) agreed they sometimes engage the driver in discussion. This is capable of causing distractions to the driver and endangering the passengers. Respondents, however argued that they do it to keep the drivers awake as some of them have the tendency to dose off while driving. On the issue of drivers over speeding, 46% said they would caution him to slow down, 39% said they would report him to law enforcement agents. About 57% of respondents claim they use seat belt most of the times while 11% said they never used it at all.

Assessment of driver's performance and responsibility:

To obtain the required information from the drivers, 200 questionnaires were administered and 180 returned for analysis. Results show that 53% of the drivers have had between 11-20 years experience in driving and that only 45% had been arrested for traffic offence (Table 3). Of the total arrest made, 48% were in the minor category, 33% were serious and the remaining 19% were considered as fatal. When asked if passengers distract them when driving, 66% answered in the affirmative. On the specific nature of distraction, 42% said the passengers complain about the vehicle condition, 35% claim the passengers make distracting noise while the remaining 23% said they sometimes criticized their driving. Majority of the drivers (72%) claim it is the passengers that encourage them to speed in the same vein they also agreed that the passengers do caution them when they over speed. Drivers claim that in most cases they have a good relationship with their passengers in the sense that they (passengers) do plead on their behalf whenever they are accosted by law enforcement agents for routine checks.

Focus group discussion: In order to validate some of the research findings, a focus group discussion was carried out with officers of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC). The law enforcement officers confirm that to a large extent, passengers exert a certain degree of influence on the drivers and that this observed influence is on the negative side. Apart from pleading for erring motorist not to be punished, there have even been some few cases of mob attacks on law enforcement agents when they refused to yield to the passengers. The FRSC officers unanimously agreed that the drivers behave better when they are without passengers.

The road safety officers confirm that sometimes passengers do report drivers to them for dangerous over taking or over speeding. They however, scored both passengers and drivers very low on knowledge of highway codes, a publication of the FRSC to enlighten road users on basic road signs and safety rules for pedestrians, cyclist, motorist and other group of road users. The FRSC further observed that:

- Human factors indeed constitute the most potent causes of road traffic crashes
- Pro-active efforts should be made towards sensitizing both passengers and drivers on the need to observance the highway code and observe speed limits specified for the various vehicles plying the roads
- The presence of FRSC helps to reduce the rate of traffic crashes on manned roads as compared to unmanned roads
- Most passengers are time conscious rather than being safety conscious. They will rather compromise on their safety than allow their time to be wasted. They consider the time spent with FRSC officers for routine safety checks as time waste
- There is the need to promulgate a law to punish erring passengers as all the existing laws seem to focus on drivers only

CONCLUSION

The importance of the transport sector to the socio-economic sustainability and development of nations was examined against the backdrop of the same sector being a major cause of carnage. Most studies identified the reasons for increased accidents in developing countries to include rapid urbanization process, high growth rate of traffic, poor road conditions, reckless driving and non-adherence to traffic regulations by the motorist and traffic officers. The present research examined the impact of the behavior of passengers as it affects the attitudes of drivers in obeying traffic laws and the effect of their obedience or disobedience in Abuja, Nigeria.

The research found out that passengers preferred the mini bus or Special Utility Vehicle (SUV) in line with the in-thing and majority of respondents do engage drivers in discussions while the driver is driving. The passengers equally encouraged the recklessness of drivers by advocating for them when being accosted by traffic law enforcement agents. On the drivers' part, they acknowledged the fact that most of them have been involved in one form of accident or the other. They also

attested to the fact that their accidents are not unconnected to interference from passengers by way of noise making, criticism of their driving skill or one form of complain or the other on the vehicle condition. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with members of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), one of the agencies responsible for maintaining sanity on our roads, confirmed the research findings. The research concluded that human factors constitute the most potent causes of crashes and that there is the need to promulgate a law to punish erring passengers as all the existing road traffic laws seem to focus on drivers only.

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