

The Lure of Quick Income from Commercial Three-Wheeler/Tricycle Transportation and Growing Dearth in Artisanal Apprenticeship

Azogu Adigwe Felix (Ph.D)

Lecturer at Rhema University Aba.

Email: azogu_adigwe@rhemauniversity.edu.ng

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Abstract

Since the introduction of the three-wheeler which is popularly known as keke, into the Nigeria transportation system, they have gained very wide acceptance as a convenient mode of transportation across the country. Their operation and regulation is barely non-existent in many urban and semi-urban towns. It is an all-comers affair, with the states and local authorities merely concerned with the token levy they collect from the operators on daily basis. The operators are mainly unemployed youths but in recent times, this is fast changing. The economic situation in the country which has worsened over time has made many artisanal practitioners leave their craft for keke transport business. It has also drawn secondary school leavers and even under aged individuals into the pool of keke transport operators.

This development is having some negative impact on the social and economic life of the country. The artisans are having difficult times recruiting young people into their apprenticeships. Some of those artisans are abandoning their crafts for keke transport business as a quick means of income generation for their survival and their families'. This has created dearth in apprentices in artisanal field.

This work examined the nexus between the lure for quick income and the dearth in artisanal apprentice in Aba, a hub of Micro, Small and Medium Scale enterprises in the country. Raw data through questionnaire and in-depth interviews were generated. The collected data were analysed and presented using chi-square and tables. It was established that the quick income generating nature of the three-wheeler has huge attraction for the youths which is contributing to dearth in artisanal apprentices. From the findings, one of the recommendations for proper government regulation of the sector for balanced development and economic sustainability.

Keywords: Artisans, Three-wheeler (keke), quick income generation and apprentices

Introduction

The use of tricycle/three-wheeler, (popularly called Keke) for commercial transportation as alternative to motor vehicle in Nigeria has become widely accepted. The introduction of tricycle into the transportation system of Nigeria can be traced to the then military administrator of Lagos state; Col. Buba Marwa. He introduced it as part of his strategy in addressing youth unemployment and empowerment in the state. The Obasanjo's government (1999-2007) procured and distributed tricycles to the beneficiaries of its National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP). Politicians, some Non-Governmental Organisations and Philanthropists also used tricycle in their empowerment programme for poverty reduction and employment for

youths. Today tricycle has become a popular mean of transportation in our urban and semi-urban centers. Many people especially the youth have embraced commercial tricycle operation as a means of economic survival.

Today, while commercial tricycle operation has provided jobs and is still providing jobs for many youths, there is a growing fear that young peoples' involvement could be negatively affecting their capacity and interest in artisanal apprenticeship and utilisation of skills they acquired. Many young people across Nigeria today are reluctant to learn artisanal skills. Some when they do, are not keen in utilizing the acquired skills. A lot of efforts have been made by governments at different levels to train the youth in different skills for empowerment both for employability and self-reliance. Various governments have tried to address youth unemployment by setting up agencies and programmes to train the youth in skills acquisition and self-reliance. However, many of these trained youth end up abandoning their training for easy money earning ventures like commercial tricycle operation. The lure of quick income from commercial tricycle is pushing many youths to choose it above artisanship and artisanal apprenticeship. This trend is contributing to the dwindling of master craftsmen and the extinction of some traditional crafts.

This development could be contributing to shortage of skilled manpower in certain critical sectors of the economy (Salami, 2013; Onyenekenwa, 2010).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Several literatures have exposed the dwindling interest among the young people in training for some artisanal skills and the utilization of such skills (Salami 2013, Anyadike, Emeh, Ukah, 2012, Onyenekenwa, Eneh, 2010, Akuvuo, 2019). These works have shown that there is a growing disinterest for artisanal training among the youth in Nigeria. Amid the growing disinterest for artisanal skill acquisition, there is growing number and acceptability of commercial tricycle operation by the youth as a chosen vocation. The preference of commercial tricycle operation over acquisition and utilization of skills by the youth is affecting manpower development in the country. And this may be having negative effect in the overall economic development of the economy. While tricycle operation is providing quick job and income for them, it is also robbing other vital sectors of the economy the necessary manpower to build the economy, thereby forcing the country to depend on expatriates. This situation is not good for a developing economy the needs a robust manpower to accelerate diversification and overall growth of the economy. There is no doubt that the country relies on its youthful population for its manpower needs. But if there is a great disparity in the distribution of this population across the sectors, some will surely suffer at the expense of others. The introduction of tricycle into the Nigerian economy no doubt has helped in reducing unemployment. Across the country many young people are involved in the operation of commercial tricycle. Despite the positive impact it has made, there is a growing danger that the way many young people have embraced tricycle operation, could be contributing in festering unwillingness among many young people to train in artisanship. This situation consequently is contributing to shortage in apprentice and lack of skilled and semi-skilled manpower in many other sectors of the economy.

Objectives

This research examined the lure of quick income from commercial tricycle operation and the growing dearth in artisanal apprenticeship.

The study specifically examined;

- If commercial tricycle operation is contributing in creating dearth in artisanal apprenticeship.
- If quick earning from commercial tricycle significantly influence youth preference for commercial tricycle.

Research Questions

The research question that guided this study is

- Does quick earning from commercial tricycle significantly influence youth preference for commercial tricycle?
- Is youth involvement in commercial tricycle operation contributing to shortage of artisanal apprenticeship?

Research Hypothesis

Ho₁: The realisation of quick income from commercial tricycle operation is not why the youth prefer it to artisanal apprenticeship.

Ho₂: Youth involvement in commercial tricycle operation is not contributing to the growing dearth in artisanal apprenticeship.

Study Area

Aba is a commercial city in Abia state Nigeria. It is commonly referred to as the hub of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) due to the concentration of many SMEs in the city. The city is densely populated and many of its roads are poorly constructed and in bad shape. That makes it difficult for commercial taxis to ply. The tricycles are plied in every major and adjoining roads. While there are some loading points for the tricycles, some engage in pick and drop. There are many loading points especially on roads leading to the inner streets of the city. It is the most common means of accessing the inner parts of the city. The Aba metropolis is comprised of four (4) Local Government Areas (LGAs): Aba North, Aba South, Osisioma and Ugwuagbo. Aba was chosen because it is the centre of artisanal trade in the south east and Abia state in particular.

Literature Review

In many developing economies in Africa and Asia, tricycle also called three-wheeler is a very common mode of informal public transportation. While some scholars have argued that this transport mode arose to fill-in the gap in public transport system, others are of the view that the rapid population increase and the increase in per capita income afforded many the means to seek more convenient transportation means than the usual overcrowded and poorly maintained public ones (Shimazaki & Rahman, 1996; AEI, 2014 quoted in Ipingbemi & Adabayo 2016). However, the case of Nigeria was a deliberate effort by the governments who saw it as a means to alleviate poverty and youth unemployment. Tricycle has taken over as the most common means of transportation in urban and the urban fringes in Nigeria. Many studies have been carried out on commercial tricycle operations and their challenges. According to Ipingbemi & Adabayo (2016) in their study, they found out that unemployment accounts for the large number of tricycle operators in Ibadan. Ubani, Obinna & Ugwu, Lucy (2015) in their study, established that tricycle as a mode of intra-urban transport is widely popular and accepted by the young and other categories of individuals that patronise them. Similarly, Araoye O A, Muhammed E O, Muhammed I A & Bolaji O K (2020) found out that majority of the people who patronise tricycle operators are satisfied with their services. They consider the comfort of this para-transit as paramount in their choice. Muhammad Saleh (2011) in his study identified lack of proper regulation and control of tricycle operation in Kano as a major

problem. Igwe AU & Ugochukwu SO (2023), in their study identified the challenges facing tricycle operators to include high cost of tricycle, excessive taxation and extortion by touts. Akuvuo (2019) established that tricycle operation is contributing to the dwindling interest in craftsmanship and apprenticeship, and it contributes to crime incidences.

In addition to the existing literature on tricycle, this study examined how quick income from commercial tricycle operation is pushing the youth to abandon artisanal apprenticeship for commercial tricycle operation.

Theoretical Framework

Rational choice theory

The study adopted the Rational Choice theory. According to the theory, people carry out actions based on their preferences. And their preferences are guided by their past behavior that rewarded them positively. The youth that are choosing the tricycle operation over learning of certain artisanal skills are doing so because of the rewards they derive from the tricycle operation (in this case quick financial rewards). Many may consider apprenticeship as time wasting and tedious, while tricycle operation is quick to learn and also yields fast returns.

Methodology

The study used both quantitative and qualitative method. The chi-square and simple percentage tables were used in analysing and presenting the data. Data were sourced from primary and secondary sources. The primary instruments used are structured questionnaire and in-depth interview. The population of study is the tricycle operators and artisans (shoemakers and motor mechanics). The multi-stage sampling technique was used in selecting the sample. From the groups of registered artisans in the city, 2 categories were randomly selected (motor mechanic and shoemakers). The sampling area was chosen from the garages of the motor mechanics and the clusters of shoemakers in the city, while the loading points of the tricycle operators were chosen from the local government areas. A total of 315 questionnaire were distributed to the 2 artisanal categories. The converging spots (loading points) for the tricycle operators were selected across the LGAs and the convenient method was used in administering the 315 questionnaires to the operators. Three loading points were selected from each of the Local Government Areas. From the registered artisan associations in Aba, two artisanal groups were selected: shoemakers and motor mechanics. One mechanic village was selected from each local government area, while shoemakers' hubs in Osioma and Aba North Local Government Areas were chosen for the administration of the questionnaire. A total of 300 questionnaire were returned out of the 315 administered.

The chi-square was used in analyzing the data obtained. The results are presented below.

Youth involvement in commercial tricycle operation is presented in Table 1 below. From the data obtained, 75% of the commercial tricycle operators are below the age of 36.

Table 1: Age Distribution of Tricycle Operators

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15-20	57	19
21-25	63	21
26-30	61	20.3
31-35	44	14.7

36-40	22	7.3
41-45	22	7.3
46 and Above	31	10.3
Total	300	100%

Source: Field work.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents based on whether Youth preference for commercial tricycle operation is contributing in creating shortage in artisanal apprenticeship.

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	194	65
No	106	35
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Questions were asked on whether Youth preference for commercial tricycle operation is contributing in creating shortage in artisanal apprenticeship in Aba. As indicated in Table 1, it is interesting to note that majority of the respondents affirmed that Youth preference for commercial tricycle operation is contributing in creating shortage in artisanal apprenticeship in Aba.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents based on whether young people abscond from apprenticeship training due to the lure of commercial tricycle.

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	177	59
No	123	41
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Questions were asked on whether young people abscond from apprenticeship training due to the lure of commercial tricycle in Aba. Table 3 revealed that 177 respondents representing 59% of the sample agreed with the view. However, 123 respondents representing 41% of the sample disagreed with the view.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents based on whether quick income that tricycle operator guarantees is a major motivation for youth preference of tricycle over artisanal apprenticeship and practice.

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	217	72
No	83	28
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Questions were asked on whether quick income that tricycle operator guarantees is a major motivation for youth preference of tricycle over artisanal apprenticeship and practice in Aba. As shown in Table 3, majority of the respondents affirmed that quick income that tricycle operator guarantees is a major motivation for youth preference of tricycle over artisanal apprenticeship and practice in Aba.

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents based on whether youth involvement in tricycle operation is affecting Small and Medium Scale enterprises negatively.

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	253	84
No	47	16
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Questions were asked on whether youth involvement in tricycle operation is affecting Small and Medium Scale enterprises negatively in Aba. Table 4 revealed that 253 respondents representing 84% of the sample agreed with the view. However, 47 respondents representing 16% of the sample disagreed with the view.

Testing of Hypotheses

The hypotheses earlier postulated in this study was subjected to statistical test to draw a generalized and valid conclusion of the study.

The Chi – square formula is stated as:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where:

χ^2 = Chi – square Calculated

\sum = Sigma Notation

O = Observed Frequency

E = Expected Frequency

The stated hypotheses are as follows:

H_{01} : The realization of quick income from commercial Keke operation by young people is not the major motive for their involvement in that venture.

H_{02} : Youth involvement in Keke transport business is not contributing to the growing dearth in artisanal apprenticeship.

Hypothesis I

To test this hypothesis, information in Table 3 was employed.

Table 1: Contingency Table

Option	O	E	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
Yes	217	150	67	4489	29.93
No	83	150	-67	4489	29.93
Total	300				$\sum \chi^2_c = 60.06$

Source: Authors' Computation, 2024.

$$\text{Expected Frequency} = \frac{R}{V}$$

Where:

E = Expected Frequency

R = Total Number of Respondents

V = Number of Variables

$$E = \frac{300}{2}$$

$$E = 150$$

$$\alpha = 5\% = 0.05$$

$$d.f. = (n - 1) = 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$\chi^2 \text{ tab value at 5\% level of significance, } d.f: 1 = 3.841$$

Interpretation

Given that the calculated X^2 value of 60.06 is greater than the critical value of 3.841, there is no statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis, therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis which states that the realization of quick income from commercial Keke operation by young people is the major motive for their involvement in that venture.

Hypothesis II

To test this hypothesis, information in Table 1 was employed.

Table 2: Contingency Table

Option	O	E	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
Yes	194	150	44	1936	12.91
No	106	150	-44	1936	12.91
Total	300				$\sum \chi_c^2 = 25.81$

Source: Authors' Computation, 2024.

$$\text{Expected Frequency} = \frac{R}{V}$$

Where:

E = Expected Frequency

R = Total Number of Respondents

V = Number of Variables

$$E = \frac{300}{2}$$

$$E = 150$$

$$\alpha = 5\% = 0.05$$

$$d.f. = (n - 1) = 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$\chi^2 \text{ tab value at } 5\% \text{ level of significance, } d.f: 1 = 3.841$$

Interpretation

Given that the calculated X^2 value of 25.81 is greater than the critical value of 3.841, there is no statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis, therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis which states that Youth involvement in Keke transport business is contributing to the growing dearth in artisanal apprenticeship.

The interview sessions were also recorded using electronic device (mobile phone) and the interaction is also stated.

Distribution of the local artisans represented by motor mechanics and shoemakers.

Artisans	Distribution	Percentage
Motor Mechanics	150	50
Shoemakers	150	50
Total	300	100

Source: Field work.

Interview Report

The interview is presented under the following headings: youth involvement in commercial tricycle operation, shortage of apprentices, and major motive for commercial tricycle operation by the youth.

Youth involvement in commercial tricycle operation

This shows that majority of commercial tricycle operators are youth. When we have such large number of youth in commercial tricycle operation, it shows that this venture holds some attraction for them. What could be the attraction and what are the implications?

In our interview with them, majority of our respondents said that it is easy to be recruited into keke operation. They claimed that opportunity to secure keke/tricycle comes up fairly quickly. They said that people are buying and looking for whom they will give their tricycle on hire-purchased basis or on weekly returns. They all agreed that it gives them quick earning. That they are sure of money any day they come out for work. They also said that they make between six to eight thousand naira (6,000 – 8,000) daily and more than that on a good day. They also said that driving keke is pleasurable though it comes with some risks.

Shortage of apprentices

From the interview sessions we had with the artisans, they stated strongly that they are experiencing shortage of apprentices. The artisans said that many young people nowadays do not like to 'learn work'. They said that some who come for apprenticeship, demand for shorter duration in learning the art/craft while some abandon their training midway and abscond

without staying up to the number of years agreed. Some of the artisans blamed this development on the introduction of keke/tricycle as a commercial transport mode in the nation's transport system and yahoo yahoo (internet fraud). One of the respondents said "young boys of today do not want to suffer, they like easy easy life, they want to start enjoying life quick quick" one of the respondents said. They respondents blamed ostentatious life style in our society for this; the way people display ill-gotten and questionable wealth today in the society as primarily contributing in distracting young people.

Motive for commercial tricycle preference

From our interview, it was clear that what encourages many young people to go into commercial tricycle operation is to earn quick income. They claim that it is easy to learn how to ride keke; that one day or two is enough for one to learn it, and keke can be sourced quickly with contacts. They claim that learning work/apprenticeship takes longer time and suffering. They all attributed the certainty of 'money in the pocket' that commercial keke operation offers as major attraction for them.

Youth involvement in commercial tricycle as contributing to shortage of apprentice.

From the data, majority of the respondents blamed the introduction of keke and youth involvement in this commercial venture as contributing to the dearth in apprenticeship.

Conclusion

This study examined youth involvement in tricycle operation and the growing shortage of apprenticeship among artisans. From the research, it shows that majority of young people are disinterested in learning trade /craft. They rather prefer to go into ventures that offer them quick financial returns, which the tricycle is one. The rapid growth and acceptance of this mode of public transport in many of our urban and semi-urban areas opened the opportunity for many young people to take it up as a means of earning quick income.

Recommendation

Following the findings made in the course of this research, it is pertinent to recommend that the government in every state of the federation institute a regulatory body to regulate the involvement of young people in commercial keke operation. So as to avoid the gap in apprentices.

Also, the public transportation sector should not continue to be an all-comers affair. The government should formulate a policy to properly regulate and organise the sector. If this is done, other important sectors will not suffer neglect. There is a need to synergise the system for holistic integrated development and economic resourcefulness and sustainability.

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