

ENVIRONMENT AND THE BEHAVIOURAL PATTERN OF COMMERCIAL MOTOR CYCLISTS IN THE NIGERIAN STATES CAPITALS

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of environment on the behavioural pattern of the commercial motorcyclists in some of the state capitals in Nigeria; literatures relevant to the study were extensively reviewed. Physical environment, economy environment, socio cultural environment and psychological environment and the behaviour of commercial cyclists were thoroughly assessed and the degree of relationships existing between them was determined analytically. The deplorable conditions of the roads and how the commercial cyclists make use of these roads are in no means comparable since it is indicated that sharp corners were go-slow spots which perhaps can lead to road accidents if they were not carefully negotiated. This could be linked to the absence of road signs and inability of the road users to interpret road signs. The commercial cyclists belong to different groups which form the most immediate day to day social environment and that these groups influence the behaviour of their members and promote conformity, but aggression is the personality variable to accidents. Based on the findings, the conclusions were drawn that poor economic status which leads to poor nutrition which further leads to poor physical appearance; that inability to secure good meals and clothing force the commercial cyclists into alcoholism especially in the cold weather and this makes them to be no respecters of anyone through their rough high speed and unpleasant abusive terms. Recommendations were made that Government should establish school of commercial cyclists so that these cyclists should be educated to enable them to know the functions of the parts of the motorcycles, read traffic signs, as well as safety measures such as starting time and stopping time and hence attain process skills; key words – Environment, Behavioural Pattern, Commercial Motorcyclists, state capitals.

Introduction

Lewin (2006) emphasized the point that behaviour of a person is due to the distribution of social forces in a particular environment, as a whole rather

than to intrinsic properties of individuals. In support of this, Fontana (1981) maintained that an individual with a particular kind of temperament or with a tendency towards aggression is not bound to become a problem, he would only develop if he is placed in a particular type of environment. A close and keen study of certain problem behaviours would likely reveal that many behaviours which individuals exhibit can only be understood if one views them within the context of any relationship. Holland (2001) asserted that behaviour does not occur in isolation and independent of the world you live in, there are events that precede the events that follow your action. If the environment is defined as a general term designating all objects, forces and conditions that affect the individual through such stimuli as he is able to receive, it is imperative that if these objects, forces and conditions that stimulate a businessman after his normal operation is not there, that environment is not a healthy one for economic, social and inter-personal interaction.

The behavioural pattern of commercial motor cyclists in Uyo Metropolis is quite different from that of other businessmen such as mechanics, welders, tailors, carpenters and so on. Lack of emotional control as well as degree of reckless riding makes people to stereotype them as the most aggressive set of people despite the fact that their services are needed by more than seventy-five percent of the total population in Uyo Metropolis.

- (i) What are the factors responsible for this pattern of behaviour

- (ii) can environment influence or contribute to this pattern of behaviour.
- (iii) Are there any other unknown variables?
- (iv) Is there any other way in which the problems could be modified? It could be observed that there are certain evidences serve as proofs of environmental and behavioural relationship and non-relationship. The main problem of this research work therefore is to investigate whether there is any significant relationship between environment and behavioural pattern of commercial motor cyclists.

The Behavioural Pattern of Commercial Motorcyclists – Nigerian View

Everyday, thousands of road users are either abused, beaten up, assaulted, injured, killed or maimed for life as a result of behavioural patterns of motorcyclists. Visits to University Teaching hospitals, General State Hospital, orthopedics units, some specialist, clinics and data collection revealed that some of the patients treated between January and May 2010 in Akwa Ibom State were 1760 cases. Also at one of the specialist home clinics at Itam, 286 cases involving motor cyclists, were treated the number of deaths were not counted. This inhuman treatment and accident rates have far reaching effects on family life and the development of the country's economy.

The popular message from the Ministry of Information, Culture, Attitudinal and Ethical Re-orientation,

condemned in totality the attitude of commercial motorcyclists, aggression, arrogance as well as reckless riding. One of the major-items on the NTA News of August 5th 2004 at 7.00 p.m. was a serious warning to commercial motorcyclists in Nigeria. The warning came from Lagos State Police Command, the commercial motorcyclists were warned against unruly and aggressive behaviour since their attitude always resulted in series of road accidents in any metropolis they operate. 23rd August, 2004 at 9.00p.m., during the Network News, President Olusegun Obasanjo gave a warning to commercial motorcyclists at Abuja. He witnessed how the cyclists teamed up to beat up and assault car owners when an accident which involved their colleagues occurs. Akwa Ibom State Deputy Governor Ekpotu warned the commercial motorcyclist against their attitude in taking laws into their hands by harassing people in the town. Our national dailies, magazines as well as journals carry various reports and researches on behavioural patterns of commercial motorcyclists. Daily Time March 30th, 1994 reported that some years ago in Cross River State, a bank manager was lynched in broad day light by irate commercial motorcyclists. The cyclist, the paper reported acted in solidarity with a compatriot of theirs who was unintentionally pushed down by the bank manager. The paper described the motorcyclists as those who present the most potent hazards both to the passengers and other road users due to their excessive speeding, misjudged overtaking and other dangerous antics. The commercial

motorcyclist popularly called Okada has come to stay as a useful means of public transport. We have the "Okada" operation to be taken over by hoodlums, ruffians, aggressors and killers, (Magbor, 1998).

Ekpenyong (2006) pointed out that going on a motorbike is one of the greatest risks people are forced to face. Some motorcyclists do not have trafficators and often do not obey traffic rules. They overtake as it pleases them without a thought for passenger's life and this results in fatal accidents. Motorcyclists often become intoxicated with the power of their machines, weaving in and out of traffic at dangerous speeds, (Ukpong, 2002). When he was asked to comment on the activities, behaviour and the attitude of commercial motorcyclists at a workshop on "Motorcycle injuries", Prevision and Management at Ibadan, Norvin (2003) asserted that a despoiler of expected years of life, a producer of human misery, waster of natural and other economic resources and a degrader of the quality of human existence, motorcycle probably rank first among health problems of Nigeria people. On answering questions such as: when are people aggressive? Green (2003) wrote that "people are more likely to be aggressive when they are both physiologically aroused and experience strong emotion such as anger. People tend to either lash out at those who make them angry or to displace their anger into a defenseless target such as children and pests. Through the symptoms of emotion they become frustrated and aggression sets in. this instinct may likely be seen as having contributed to the problem

behaviour of commercial motorcyclists in Uyo urban as they usually cooperate and team up to beat innocent road users even at slight misunderstanding.

Physical Environment

Our environment threatens us in many ways, for example physical danger speeding cars, aeroplanes, storms and other aspects of physical world that are dangerous and harmful. We are in social and psychological conflicts with other people and ourselves, thus our lives are full of tests, personal difficulties and problems to be solved. There are changes, demands, threats and other conditions in our lives that produce tensions. The complexities and the pace of modern life confronts us with daily problems, besides, our struggle for increasing opportunities in academic and vocational lives becomes more and more competitive and stressful. The relationship between heat and aggression is particularly well documented by Anderson (2002) where he posited that as the temperature rises, so does tempers. Anderson and Calsmith (2009) found a correlation between temperature and incidence of riot in U.S. cities between 1967 and 1971. Rape, murder, assault and prison unrest all vary with the time of the year peaking in the hot summer months.

Baron (2004) supported this with phrases such as “hot under the collar”, “The heat of anger” to support the existence of a link between high temperature and irritability if not over aggression. Baron went further to state that human beings because of their growing number and increasing industrial activities

are re-shaping the physical environment in some critical ways. Such aspects of the physical environment include noise, temperature and light which have potentials to influence our behaviour. It is certain that exposure to extreme heat induces harmful physiological effects that can ultimately cause the individuals to become incapable of any physical activities.

Investigations frequently reveal the cause of commercial cyclists accidents to be human error, thus most effort is directed at the Governors of the states in Nigeria to reform this behaviour for the betterment of the citizenry and alter this behaviour, Anderson, (2002). Motorcyclists should be educated to enable them to know the functions of the parts of the motorcycles, read traffic signs as well as safety measures such as starting time and stopping time. The motorcyclists should be safely conscious, freedom from aggression competitive riding tendencies, freedom from emotional disturbances, fatigue, illness and should have adequate hearing and vision, Dieh (2007). Various arms of the government have been called upon to monitor the activities of the commercial motorcyclists in an effort to get them change their behaviour on the use of roads. Seminars and workshops should equally be organized regularly for the cyclists to improve their performance on the roads and their relationships with the public, Ekwere, (2003). Crowding as the effects of close encounters with other people has its effects on the social behaviour of these motorcyclists. Thus, Bell, Fisher and Baum (2009) had this to say: “the subjective

feeling of crowding, whatever its sources, tends to exert negative effects and that it threatens senses of personal control, it may lead us to experience information overload, the feeling that the environment is producing more information than we can comfortably handle in a given period of time". The feeling of overloaded information is likely to increase the level of stress and the frequency of aggressive behaviour towards passengers and other road users.

Economic Environment

It is certain that every individual has his own expectation and goals in life and that people get frustrated when their expectations in goals are not met. Nigeria as a country is characterized by income inequality and higher rates of unemployment and low income hinders investment and business operations. Some of the commercial motorcyclists are forced into the business by poverty and unemployment after successfully completing secondary education. During a workshop organized by the Special Marshals in Ilorin, Kwara State, the Zonal head, public enlightenment FRSC R58 Ilorin, Balal (2004), described commercial cyclists as a child concerned without adequate planning. The Federal Road Safety Commission Officer attributed the large number of commercial cyclists on the high ways to economic depression across the country. He further asserted that compiling a code of conduct for the riders is necessary since these codes would assist them to know the dos and don'ts of a cyclist.

Poor economic status leads to poor nutrition which further leads to poor physical appearance. Inability to secure good meals and clothing forces the motorcyclists into alcoholism and riding under the influence of alcohol induces the cyclists into recklessness which eventually leads to road accidents as well as verbal abuse of other road users. In their contribution to the effect of good behavioural pattern of motocyclist, Archibong and Coon (2000) saw alcohol as the drug which is most of associated with violent behaviour use is associated with increased rate of aggression and violence. Watson (2004) attributed alcohol use in the United State to high crime and reckless life susceptible to danger.

To some passengers, motorcyclists over speeding would help them carry as many passengers as possible to raise enough money for daily contributions. By luck, their target may be met in some days, these are rather unpredictable events which on contrary could result in motor accidents. The belief that over speeding would make them raise much money in a day is what could be described as an inappropriate conclusion anyone can make.

Socio-Cultural Environment

The group to which one belongs forms his most immediate day to day social environment and each person is a member of many groups, families, teams, churches or work groups. Some groups are formal and well organized while others are informal and loosely gathered for ill-motivated purposes. Macion (2003) concluded that groups influence the

behaviour of members and promote conformity “fighting in” provides a security feelings of belonging. Anderson (2002) conducted a classical experiment that showed the power of the group to generate conformity. He recruited students purposely for a study of visual perception. Before the experiment began, he explained to all but one member in a small group that his real purpose was to put pressure on the remaining person. Arranging 6, 8 students around a table, he showed them how to match one of the three lines on card 2.

Anyone with normal vision could easily observe that the marked “A” on Card 2 is the correct choice, initially as planned by Anderson everyone who matches correctly but then Anderson secret accomplices began answering incorrectly leaving the naïve subject (sitted at the tale in order to answer next to the last) bewildered and uncomfortable, what we envisaged happened? Anderson found that one-third of the students confirmed the secrets of the accomplices to the others by answering incorrectly. Apparently many of us are unwilling to compromise our judgement to avoid being different even from people we do not know. The situation is very typical of passengers cyclists in Nigeria who always compromise and team up to beat innocent citizens who have problems with their colleagues or set ablaze any vehicle that get involved in accidents with their fellow cyclists.

Bandura (1999) saw social learning theory as one of the most widely accepted explanations of aggression and also the simplest. This theory holds that we

learn to be aggressive by observing aggression in others. According to Marshall and Rose (1999), there is no instinctive human programming for fist fighting, pipe bombing, knife welding, gun loading, 95 miles an hour, beam ball or other elements of violent or aggressive behaviour. They went on to conclude that this is why being physically abused as well is strongly related to violence or aggressive behaviours are transparently likely.

Social learning theorists predict that individuals growing up in a non-violent culture would themselves be non-aggressive. These raised in culture where violence is the ordiness of the day would learn aggressive tendencies. But poor groups influence has a greater impact on the members of such groups. General observation and data collection indicated that a good percentage of commercial motorcyclists usually violate traffic rules at traffic posts and that this is a real factor contributing to accident. Other factors identified are brake failure, environmental hazards, personal maladjustment, social maladjustment and information processing deficiency, Myers (2007).

Conclusion

On the whole the combination of all environment worked together cause problem behaviour of commercial cyclists in some of the Nigerian state capitals. The influences on the commercial motorcyclists in Uyo metropolis, for example, were similar to those reported in literature concerning the behavioural pattern of the commercial rider. If what was observed in Nigerian capital cities was

accurate, one could conclude that weather, deplorable conditions of roads, economic status, uncondusive home environment as well as attitudes of commercial buses and other road users can not work independently to influence the behaviour of the commercial cyclists.

Recommendations

Based on this paper, the following recommendations are made:

Government should establish school of commercial motorcycles where they can be properly trained to know whom they are, and be able to define the profession they have choosen.

Besides, seminars should organized regularly by the Government and other road safety agents to re-educate the commercial motorcyclists in order to make them to:

- think of the need to minimize their reckless riding and excessive speed.
- carry only the authorized members of passengers allowed on the motorcycles by the Government.
- observe the dangers associated with overloading motorcyclists with excess luggage.
- riding with care and good association with colleagues and customers place individuals in the communities in peaceful co-existence.

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