

Touts, Crime and Maintenance of Social Order: A Study of Some Selected Motor Parks in Edo State

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Abstract

Motor parks in Nigeria were originally constructed without consideration of touts and touting activities. No sooner had touting crept into the transportation system than Nigerians began to experience disequilibrium in the social order in the motor parks and society in general. Unfortunately and inspite of the laws against touting particularly due to the associated criminal implications, this social menace has gone on unabatedly. The study therefore investigated touting, crime and maintenance of social order in Edo state. Data were collected through survey method with the use of structured questionnaires that were administered to 250 respondents. Frequency count and percentage were employed to analyze the demographic data section of the research instrument. While the chi-square statistical technique was used to test the two

hypotheses formulated for the study. The result reveals that unemployment is a contributing factor in touting and that touting has severe implications on Nigeria's social order. The study recommends that government should as a matter of urgency, create more employment opportunities for youths in all sectors; show the political will in tackling the menace of touting and also provide the law enforcement agencies with needed operational facilities.

Key Words: Crime, touting, social order, social vices

Word count: 189

Introduction

Generally, motor parks are constructed by various governments in the society to provide safe space for vehicles and also for the purpose of loading and off loading passengers. Thus, motor parks are designed to forestall the ugly scenario where vehicles are parked on the roadside, thereby resulting in unnecessary traffic jam (Bajulaiye, 2005). Similarly, Osila (2011) notes that the creation of motor parks in modern times is to give room for orderliness and accountability in the transport business through a tripartite arrangement between transporters and the government on one hand, and transporters and the public, on the other. For example, in Benin City, the capital of Edo state, there exist several motor parks that were constructed by the government. Such as, parks are New Benin motor park, Uselu motor park, Ogida motor park. However, due to the sheer inability of government to carry out its statutory responsibility, private individuals and organizations to come into the construction of motor parks. Examples exist in Edegbe motor park, Iyare motor park, Big Joe motor park, God is Good motor park and Eagle line motor park to mention but a few. These motor parks were built by private individuals and organizations to ensure that there is orderliness in their transportation business during loading and off loading of commuters.

At the early existence of the government constructed motor parks in Edo state, all vehicles plying within and out the state had spaces allocated to them within the confines of the motor parks. This arrangement at that time brought sanity within the motor parks and as well, generated a lot of revenue to both the Nigerian Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) and the Edo state government. Besides the economic importance of these motor parks, they provided safety measure for passengers, especially, those who travel outside the state. Goods lost in transit can be easily traced and recovered under a properly organized transportation system (Motor Park). In the event of a vehicle being involved in an accident, it can be easily traced to their point of departure with the help of passenger manifest (Osila, 2011). Today, the status has changed with the advent of both illegal motor parks, social and criminal menace of touts in and around the various motor parks in Edo state.

A tout is a freelance worker at railway stations, airports, ferry points, and especially motor parks, who undertakes the self-imposed responsibility of recruiting and organizing passengers who wish to travel by road, and for this work, they receive a fee, or more appropriately a 'commission', that is generally paid by the drivers of the vehicles just before their departure (Okpara, 2008). One major feature of most of the motor parks in Edo state is that the presence of touts which are mostly unemployed youths. These youths have perpetually resorted to spending their days in the part to extort money from the professional motor drivers. Sometimes, they lord it over the drivers through act of hooliganism and extort money from the unwilling drivers. As noted by Adegboyega, Okesina and Mustapha (2016) these touts engage in cigarette and hemp smoking and the drinking of alcohols as they constitute themselves into social miscreants with no regard for law nor for fellow human beings. It has been observed by Salawu (2009) that the pull created by unemployment has pushed many individuals into forming groups usually referred to as touts, whose activities revolve round the streets, bus stop, market, motor parks and especially, the transport corridors. These touts hang around motor parks

and most times claim they are working for government especially the local government authorities. But in the real sense, most of these tout work for their god fathers, union chairmen and garrison politicians (Lana, 2011).

Offiong, Awoyemi, Maduka, Ewa and Onogbosele (2015) observe that since there are no jobs even for the educated ones, and the complete neglect of government, the only means of survival rather than taking to robbery is to become a tout in motor parks where small stipends are a sure bet. Salami (2002) in a similar study, identified unemployment, poor wages and poor living conditions among others as factors influencing touting activities in urban motor parks in Nigeria. He further noted that high rate of unemployment, poor wages and poor living conditions were factors influencing touting activities in urban motor parks in Nigeria. High rate of unemployment, and poverty have led to more than proportionate increase in deviant careers, violence and criminal activities, loss of lives and properties in most urban centres.

Momoh (2000) and Ikumola et al (2011) pointed out that the activities of touts are usually marked by incessant fights over loading rights in the streets, bus stops, motor parks and business districts. Similarly, the malevolent character of touts, relative groups and the destructive goals of their members, as revealed by the atrocity in the urban areas are noted for destruction of public peace. These atrocities are not only increasing in proportion but lethally more devastating and sophisticated in organization. Reports of these dastardly atrocities and acts such as looting, killing, raping, acid bathing, thuggery, exhortation, property destruction and stealing have become more rampant among touts in the urban centres of Nigeria (Offiong et al, 2015). Curiously, despite public resentment and government efforts to check the menace of illegal motor parks, the trend has continued unabated. The situation, no doubt arouses curiosity in the minds of many concern persons irrespective of tribe, religion and sex. This therefore is the basis for this investigation.

Objectives of the study

The main purpose of the investigation is to thoroughly examine touting, crime and maintenance of social order in Edo state. The specific objectives are;

- a. To examine the effect of unemployment on touting in motor parks
- b. To evaluate the impact of touting on criminal activities in the research hypothesis

Hypothesis

- a. There is no significant relationship between unemployment and touting at the motor parks and society
- b. There is no significant relationship between touting and criminal activities in the motor parks and society

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The social phenomenon of 'touting' has over the years become an issue each successive government has had to battle with yet the menace continues to stare Nigerians directly at the face. Touting is an activity which a person usually referred to as a tout engages. Touts are also commonly seen as agberos. The word agbero literally means "to carry passengers", but it has now become a synonym for 'tout'. Agberos collect tolls and harass bus conductors and passengers in plain sight of even the law enforcement agents. Interestingly, they have become workers, employees of the state and local government. In fact, state and local government give out contracts to private companies to collect revenue from various motor parks. The government usually has an estimate of the revenue that can be generated from the various motor parks. It then hires the company to fetch this sum, out of which the company takes 10% and/or any excess. These companies exclusively hire touts to collect these fees. Due to government tacit approval of their existence, touts have been

allowed so much space that their tentacles have spread to all nooks and crannies in Nigeria.

Transportation remains an important aspect of any society as it enables people to access different quarters of the area for commercial and personal purposes. A good and smooth transportation system is a sine qua non for economic and social development of any society. The increasing menace of touts in the transportation system is not only a sad development but one that has made life more unbearable for the common man in the society. Touts are not only one of the problems facing traffic system in Edo state but willingly or unwillingly they have become popular members of the road administrative team. The allowance, as Ibrionke (2015) puts it which touts have enjoyed over the years has given reason for people to think or believe that they have the nudge of the government. This idea would appear wild but with the way the "Oshiomole police" behaved during his tenure as governor of Edo state, it is very difficult if not impossible not to think of it that way.

Earlier research on touting dealt mainly on the mode of operation (Okpara, 2005) while others focused on activities of touts along traffic corridors (Iginla, 2007). Offiong et al (2015) identified the following as activities performed by touts in urban motor parks:

- Collection of money from passengers
- Help in maintaining motor parks
- Help in calling passengers
- Provision of security at the motor parks

Meaning and nature of touting

Ordinarily, a tout is anyone who under takes the self imposed job of recruiting, organizing and persuading passengers to travel in a particular vehicle and for this he is paid a fee by the driver of the vehicle. His job was to act as a middle man who ensures that the vehicles get filled up early with passengers that he scouts for. Touts were very few in yester years but due to the increase of unemployed youths, they have increased

in leaps and bounds. Initially, touts did not engage in criminal activities but today in broad day light, they levy illegal tolls on bus drivers, demand bribes from market women, patrol potential car parking spaces and even threaten ordinary passers by demanding “donations”. Touts generally paints the picture of miscreants, street urchins or thugs who forcefully extort money from commercial motorcycle riders and commercial bus drivers at motor parks, bus stop and highways in the metropolis. Bologi (2009) was very apt in his description of touts. He notes that touts are generally able-bodied men who rush to grab the baggage and luggage of commuters while at the same time trying to force them into vehicles they may not originally have the intention to board. It is because of these activities that they earned the name “agbero” a Yoruba word coined out of the word “agbero” for “conveyors of passengers”.

Why touting persists

Scholars who have delved into this field – touting have given different reasons for the continued existence of the activities. Amongst the reasons put forward is youth unemployment. Youths occupy a prominent place in any society. They are one of the greatest assets any nation can have and apart from being the leaders of tomorrow, they out – numbered the middle aged and the aged (Onyekpe, 2007). The National Youth Development Policy (2001) indicated that the youths are the foundation of a society; their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pattern of development and security of a nation. The youths are also most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population in terms of social, economic, emotion and other aspects (Anasi, 2010). Youth unemployment in Nigeria is a consequence of several factors and has had severe implications on the society of which touting is one. In Nigeria, many able bodied young men migrate to the cities in search of greener pastures but unfortunately, in the cities, job opportunities are very limited thus the rate of urbanization of the youth has continued to create unemployment. Having migrated to the urban centre in search of job

opportunities, the youth find it difficult to come to terms with the fact that there are no jobs in the cities and return to the villages for agricultural pursuits. Instead “Man must survive” becomes a slogan for them. In this “man must survive” state, they take to any available job of which touting is the most accessible and attractive. And as Obarisiagbon (2017) notes unemployment is a major cause of criminal activities amongst youths in Nigeria.

Beside unemployment as a cause of touting, there is the issue of complicity of law enforcement agents. It has been alleged that the leadership of the police have links with leading sponsors of touts in Nigeria. In particular, Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) have been alleged to be in the payroll of prominent touts linchpins (Ogunbiyi, 2016). It is here contended that touting will continue to be attractive as long as touts and potential touts perceive or know that the law enforcement officers have been settled by their godfathers or are settled by themselves.

Moreover, there is the apparent lack of political will on the part of government across the country particularly in Edo state to tackle the social menace of touting. It has been alleged that some touts/agberos top shots are heavily connected to those at the corridor of policy making and so they have nothing to fear or worry about. In the same vein, some have argued that during political elections, aspirants rely on them (touts/agberos) as their security officers as well as those that carry out their dirty jobs. Thus, it becomes difficult to discard or outlaw their activities having risen to prominence on their crest. During the tenure of Adams Aliu Oshiomole, former governor of Edo state, ‘agberoism’ was the order of the day as they were feared and above the law. In fact, the fear of a new set of uniform men seen then by the public as agberos was the beginning of wisdom. Little wonder then that the people took to the street to celebrate when Godwin Obaseki, now governor of Edo state outlawed their activities. His rebranded traffic officers appear at the moment to be civil and courteous but only time shall tell.

Social implications of touting and efforts at curbing the menace

Scholars have identified different nefarious activities as the result of touting activities. Offiong et al (2015) in their study identified the following as the effect of touting:

- Extortion of money
- Illegal collection of fees
- Vandalism
- Raping
- Killings
- Thuggery, and
- Stealing.

This categorization of the nefarious activities carried out by touts in urban motor parks is consistent with those of Momoh (2002) and Ikumola et al (2011) when they noted that touts are involved in such immoral acts as looting, killing, acid bathing, property destruction and the likes.

Across the country, different state governments have spoken up against touting; Lagos state, Rivers state and Edo state government in particular have at one time or the other outlawed touting activities in their respective states. Besides, in 2008, Senator Effiong Dickson Bob sponsored a bill for an Act to prohibit touting in all public places and to establish the national committee against touting in the Federal republic of Nigeria and for other related matters. The law thus enacted by the National assembly provides in Section 1:

That from the commencement of the Act, no person or group of persons or association of individuals shall terrorize local or foreign investors at public places or at the airport, seaports, railway station, motor parks, transport owners, commercial drivers, farmers and traders in transit with their farm produce and consignment respectively in different parts of the country. Also, no group of persons, association of individuals shall retain, organize, train or camouflage their activities using names, impersonating the national, state and local government councils to use force or coercion in order to promote personal or group interest

promoting touting in public places and any person or group of persons association of individuals who engage in any act of touting or any act capable of causing detraction, frustration of economic and commercial activities in public places commits an offence under the Act.

In spite of this Act, the activities of touts have continued to thrive and have become even more lucrative due to the amount of money they make every day because of the kind of power they exude, so many drivers especially the lazy ones to jettison driving for touting (Eguagie, 2017).

Theoretical explication

The study adopted the labelling theory in its explication of the topic under investigation. Labelling theory is the view of deviance according to which being labeled as a “deviant” leads a person to engage in deviant behaviour. The theory seeks to explain why people’s behaviour clashes with social norms. This theory has its origin in Durkheim (1897) work on suicide where he found that crime is not so much a violation of the law as it is an act that outrages society. He holds that labelling satisfies society’s need to control behaviour. Tannenbaum (1938) is widely regarded as the first labelling theorist. He opined that ‘if an individual is described as being a criminal that he automatically becomes one. On his part, Lamert (1951) commonly referred to as the forerunner of the present day labelling theory held that a person experiences social deviance into two phases viz primary and secondary deviance. The primary deviance phase begins with a criminal act but has yet to accept the label. If the person views himself as a criminal then the secondary deviant phase has begun. Interestingly, Becker (1963) is held to be the architect of the modern labelling theory. He posited that criminal behaviour is dynamic in nature and changes throughout time. For him, what matters most is how people and society react and operate with others who have the criminal label. The theory believes that no act is intrinsically criminal and that definition of

criminality established by those in power through the formulation of laws and the interpretation of those laws by the police, court and prisons.

In relation to the topic under study, labelling theory would imply that touts, agberos do not have any set of characteristics but rather it is the process of interaction between deviants and non deviants and the context in which criminality is being interpreted. Further implied here is that touts were first labeled as criminal by those they perhaps extorted money from before the entire society labeled all touts as criminals and dangerous people by nature without actually knowing the person as long as the person works inside the motor park, and bus stop and the person gives tickets to drivers, load and off load passengers from the vehicle. Some touts who were initially gentle in their approach and not into criminal acts take to criminality on being labeled and become aggressive "after all what else will they call me" comes to play in his mind.

Methods and materials

This is a cross-sectional survey which was carried out in Benin City, using four motor parks: Uselu, Ugbowo, Sapele Road and Ikpoba Hill motor parks as case study. The study adopted both the primary and secondary sources of data collection with the questionnaire as the main research instrument for the primary source while journals, archival, library and internet for the secondary source.

The study adopted the purposive sampling technique to elicit information from drivers, conductors and touts in the four selected motor parks. A total of 260 structured questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents out of which 250 were retrieved and used for the study. The population of study comprised of all conductors, drivers and touts in Edo state. The instrument that was used to collect data for the study is a researcher's-developed questionnaire titled "causes and effects of touting questionnaire" (CETQ). The questionnaire consist of sections A and B. Section A dealt with respondents' demographic data while section B consisted of twenty items on cause and effects of touting activities.

To ascertain the validity of the instrument, a draft copy of the research instrument was given to four experts in the Department of Educational Foundation, University of Benin for vetting. All corrections and verifications made were later incorporated, which made the instrument valid for study. On the other hand, the reliability of the instrument was established using the test re-test method on twenty respondents within an interval of four weeks. After which the Pearson product moment correlation (r) was used in determining the reliability of the instrument. A coefficient of 0.72 was obtained, hence, the instrument was adjudged reliable for the study. Data obtained from the questionnaire administration were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency count and percentage were employed to analyze the demographic data section of the research instrument. While the chi-square statistical technique was used to test the two hypotheses formulated for the study.

Discussion and interpretation of findings

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Sex		
Male	196	78.4
Female	54	21.6
Total	250	100
Marital Status		
Single	122	48.8
Married	118	47.2
Divorced	10	4
Total	250	100
Age		
16-25	100	40

26-35	68	27.2
36-45	50	20
46-55	20	8
56 and above	12	4.8
Total	250	100
Educational level		
Primary education	74	29.6
Post primary education	66	26.4
Higher education	20	8
Total	250	100
Religion		
Christianity	236	94.6
Islam	4	1.6
ATR	10	4
Total	250	100

Source: field survey, 2018

Table 1 depicts the results of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It reveals that among the 250 respondents who participated in the study, 78.4% of them were male while 21.6% were female. 48.8% of them were single, 47.2% were married while 4% were divorced. As per age, 40% of the respondents were in the 16-25 years age range, 27.2% were between 26-35 years, 20% were between 36-45 years while 8% were between 46-55 years and 4.8% were 56 years and above. On educational level, 29.6% of the respondents had primary education, 26.4% had post primary education while 8% had higher education. 94.6% of the respondents were Christians, 1.6% Muslims and 4% practiced African Traditional Religion.

Test for hypothesis one

Ho: there is no significant relationship between unemployment and touting

Hi: there is a significant relationship between unemployment and touting

	0	ε	0- ε	(0- ε)	(0- ε) ²
Yes	215	125	90	8100	64.8
No	35	125	-90	8100	64.8
Total	250	250	0	16,200	129.6

$$\frac{\sum (0- \epsilon)^2}{\epsilon} = 129.6$$

Df = Significant level of 0.05

Chi-square	129.6
Degree of freedom	1
Significant level	0.05

From the result above, the calculative value stands as 129.6 and the critical value (table) 3.84 degree of freedom of 1 and significant level of 0.05. The result shows that the calculative value is higher than the table (critical) value hence; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between unemployment and touting. The finding of this study is in tandem with Offiong et al (2015), Obarisiagbon (2017) studies which found unemployment leads youths into all such of activities including touting in order to make ends meet.

Test for hypothesis two

Ho: there is no significant relationship between crime and touting

Hi: there is a significant relationship between crime and touting

	0	ε	0- ε	(0- ε)²	(0- ε)²
Yes	222	125	97	9409	75.2
No	28	125	-97	9409	75.2
Total	250	250	0	18,818	150.54

$$\frac{\sum (0 - \epsilon)^2}{\epsilon} = 129.6$$

Df = Significant level of 0.05

150.54

Chi-square	150.54
Degree of freedom	1
Significant level	0.05

From the result above, the calculative value stands as 150.4 and the critical value (table) 3.84 degree of freedom of 1 and significant level of 0.05. The result shows that the calculative value is higher than the table (critical) value hence; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between crime and touting. This finding further lends credence to the studies of Momoh (2000), Ikumola et al (2011) and Offiong et al (2015) which found that touting leads to anti-social vices and criminal activities ranging from incessant fighting to extortion, stealing, arson and rape.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study sought to examine touting, crime and maintenance of social order. Findings from the study revealed that though motor parks were originally constructed to provide not just a safe parking space for vehicles but also to serve the purpose of loading and off loading of passengers. The design of motor parks meant that unnecessary traffic jams were to be avoided but today, the reverse is the case as traffic jam exists wherever motor parks are and more worrisome is the fact that touting has given rise to criminal activities not only within the motor parks but even beyond. The study therefore recommends that:

There is the need for government to show the political will in tackling the menace of touting. This requires firm steps to curb the lawlessness of touts.

The police and other law enforcement agencies should hunt down, arrest and bring to book, any tout involved in any form of criminal or anti-social activities. This implies the monitoring of the operations of transport unions so as to avert the incessant infringement on the law and the rights of citizens to operate freely in the society.

Government should as a matter of urgency, create more employment opportunities for youths in all sectors.

Workshops, seminars and training programmes should be organized for drivers, conductors and touts, on the need to observe the best practices in their line of duty. The evils of social vices should also be highlighted, at the same time stressing that no one is above the law.

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