Commercial Drivers’ Unprincipled Behaviour and Commuters’ Discontent: Perception from One Side of a Coin

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Abstract - Behaviours of commercial drivers have been examined to influence the choice of public transport services by commuters. This study aimed at determining issues discouraging patrons of informal public transport services. Primary data was used for this study. The primary method included the use of focus group discussions (FGDs) carried out in Shaki, Oyo State. Voluntary participation method was used to select 22 participants for the FGDs. Fourteen (14) predetermined questions were discussed among participants. Responses were transcribed and thematic analysis method was used to create main themes. Results showed that unprincipled behaviours were a common place as reported by 100% of respondents. Majority of respondents reported displeasures and desire to own private means of mobility. The study concluded that sustainable patronage of public transport service would be threatened if commercial drivers’ activities in relation to interaction with commuters are not regulated.

Keywords: Commercial Drivers, Commuters, Unprincipled Behaviour, Discontent, Transport Services, Patronage

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, there has been a reasonable representation of studies on public transport (PT) on users’ satisfaction. Most of these studies have argued that functional, instrumental or core service attributes, such as frequency, travel speed, timeliness (Brons et al., 2009; Mouwen, 2015), are major determinants of travellers’ overall satisfaction. While these factors have been generally regarded as key performance indicators that would satisfy frequent public transport users, other studies have also identified cleanliness, privacy, personal safety and security, convenience, stress, social interaction and scenery as significant to travellers’ satisfaction with their journey (e.g., Stradling et al., 2007).

In the assessment of service quality and satisfaction, investigating feedback from users is germane to understanding their level of satisfaction with the quality of service provided so that responses from the public may be used to leverage existing services or influence future expectations. Investigating service quality satisfaction is important especially because of demand differentials of users both in terms of travel needs, priorities, and processes involved in satisfying such travel needs. Susilo et al., (2015b) stressed that understanding factors underlying travel satisfaction for different groups of individuals is important to providing transport service that meets individual travel needs. However, over the years, a series of comprehensive multidisciplinary studies have been developed on theoretical and empirical analysis of users’ satisfaction with PT services (Friman et al., 1998, 2001, 2013; Olsson et al., 2012). Some of these studies revealed that individual travel satisfaction is a function of a wide range of factors including but not limited to built environment and users’ subjective well-being.

According to Friman et al., (2013), inappropriate treatment or dissatisfaction caused by operators of PT to customers such as delay, inadequate information, or poor maintenance of infrastructure are often remembered by users, either consciously or unconsciously. This experience thus formed the basis for decision making regarding future patronage of such service or considering a switch to another (Waygood et al., 2012; Avineri, 2004). Studies have also emphasized the need to balance users’ experience in respect to both negative and positive experiences. Friman et al., (2001) argued that finding dissatisfying incidences among public transport users is critical for defining priority areas of intervention to the providers.

In essence, the review provided above provides an assessment of factors determining PT users’ satisfaction both from positive and negative perspectives as well as the implication of their experience for future use of such public transport service. However, little was known about users’ self-reported discontent to behaviours of drivers of informal commercial buses. Study of this nature which seeks to unravel commuters’ untold stories of negative behaviours of informal commercial drivers is needed to understand reason for increased desire for private car ownership in the developing countries.

It is also significant because advocates of sustainable development agenda have highlighted decreasing car use and increasing public transport as part of tools for reducing congestion and high accident probability, reducing noise and improving air quality, all of which form part of urban sustainable transport agenda. Thus, patronage of PT may only be encouraged when commercial drivers exhibit some refined behaviours capable of attracting users of PT as Stradling et al., (2007) said that nature of bus traveling experience will likely influence levels of patronage.
II. STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

The study site is Saki also spelt as Shaki, Oyo state, Southwestern Nigeria. The town lies near the source of the Ofiki River, the chief tributary of the Ogun River, about 40 miles (60 km) from the Benin border. Saki is referred to as the food basket of Oyo State because of its agricultural activities. The choice of this study area was informed by the border-town characteristic which has greatly increased flow of movement into and outside the study area. Informal commercial public means of transport form majority of the means of mobility in the study area. Also, walking provides another major means of mobility for majority of dwellers in the study area.

Qualitative approach was used for this study. This approach involved the use of focus group discussion. There is no known study that utilized FGD method to generate information on users’ discontent with commercial drivers’ behaviours in the study area.

Three focus groups were held with a total of 22 participants - first group has eight (8) participants comprising two students, three trading women and three business owners. The second and third groups were made up of seven participants apiece which comprised of two students, three trading women and two business owners, for each of the second and third groups respectively.

This followed Krueger and Casey (2000) suggestion of focus groups between 6 and 8. Discussion was conducted with intermix of Yoruba and English Languages based on the composition of the groups. Where question asked in English language was not properly understood, it was then translated to Yoruba, being a local language.

The focus group discussion was held with a mixture of students of Oke-Ogun Polytechnic (a private institution in the study area) (6), traders who were mainly women (8) who engaged in patronizing periodic markets across adjoining towns and villages, as well as business owners (8) in the study area. To be able to participate, participants must have travelled outside the study area at least five times or must have taken intra-city vehicle at least ten times in the last one year. This was confirmed from each participant before recruiting them for the FGD.

The significance of this condition was to enable participants easily recall their experience and how they reacted during such encounter with drivers. However, participants’ consent was sought before the commencement of the discussion. Participants were equally informed of their freedom to withdraw from the discussion whenever they feel uninterested in the process. Each group was taken by two research assistants (RAs) who had been given prior tutoring on FGD procedure.

One of the two assistants for each group acted as the lead questioner while the other was in charge of recording participants’ responses and other note takings. Predetermined questions were shown on Table I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>How often do you take public transport?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Have you ever experienced bad behaviour from public transport drivers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Have you been discontent with such driver’s attitude?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>What was the behaviour that made you feel discontent?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>How often do you experience such attitude or have people complained of such attitude?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What do you think usually lead to such behaviour?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Can you generalize such behaviour to all drivers?</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Is this behaviour peculiar to a particular age group, say younger drivers or older drivers or both?</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>How do you feel each time you experience such behaviour from drivers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do you see this behaviour as peculiar to this area of the country or a general concern?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Does it have any implication on drivers’ safe driving and passengers’ safety?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Do you think the Management (NURTW or RTÉAN) have control over drivers’ behaviour?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Do you think government has a role to play in this regard?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>What are such roles?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. DATA ANALYSIS

Data were transcribed verbatim by RAs with the use of recorder. Analysis was done through familiarization and ongoing interpretation of data which allowed for the generalization of similar responses thus helping to create main themes using thematic analysis. The thoroughness of interpretation was verified by Lead Researcher to establish consistencies and similarities in the themes as reported by the RAs.

IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A. Frequency of Using Public Transport

Participants were asked about how frequently they use commercial transport. This was necessary to be able to know their likelihood of susceptibility to any unprincipled behaviour from commercial drivers. All the participating students (27.27%) reported they use informal commercial bus at least 5 days in a week, except when school is on vacation, Seven of the business owners who were mainly men and who formed 31.8% of the participants reported at least 5 days except when out of the study area to buy their goods, while one man reported he hardly use public transport because he owns a personal car. On the other hand, women traders who constituted 32.36% of the
participants reported at least three times in a week because they sometimes spend greater part of the week moving their wares to various adjoining periodic markets before returning home to prepare for further business.

B. Experience, Frequency of Unprincipled Behaviour and Discontent Felt

Participants were asked if they have experienced any unprincipled behaviour from commercial drivers at any time. All the participants (100%) reported that they have experienced unprincipled behaviour from commercial public bus on several occasions. The excerpt below represents dominant response across the three groups of participants:

O ti di baraku (meaning, it has become accustomed to).

In the parlance of the cultural setting where the study was carried out, such statement implies a habit that is inured and seems to be of non-effect to any commuters.

Ko ni’ye o (meaning, time without numbers).

A kan n gba kamu ni (meaning, we are just bearing it).

The two excerpts above attest to the first excerpt, because habit is formed from repetitiveness of character.

Further, some participants reported that they usually feel displeased and dissatisfied with the drivers and their behaviour and found them as generally rude. The following excerpts given by two participants captured the opinion of the participants who generally confessed that they feel bad each time they are treated unruly by drivers and would wish they possess private means of mobility:

I n fact, I feel so ‘baaaad’, I mean so bad that I wish I can avoid public transport and own a car.

And the second:

I feel sometimes scared and insecure especially when some of them (drivers) threaten to beat you up and bragging of thudding you with charms.

This feeling plays down the quest to discourage private ownership of cars which is one of the contributory factors to increasing ownership of cars and consequent congestion and global emission. However, some participants also reported that though, most drivers are rude in behaviour, passengers have adapted to it. However, one participant (4.54%) reported that though there are occasions when one feels dissatisfied with drivers’ rude behaviour, one needs to keep mute especially when the driver is an older person and at times the need to just avoid trouble:

Nigba miran eeyan kan ni lati gbenu dake paapaa julo ti awako naa ba je agbalagba.(Meaning, sometimes one has to keep silent especially when the driver is an older person).

C. Types of Unprincipled Behaviour Found Among Categories of Drivers, Factors and Frequency

Participants were asked of various behaviours that caused discontent to them. Table II summarized types of behaviours experienced by participants, their perceived factors and frequency of occurrence. Every participant reported that unprincipled behaviour is common among old and young categories of drivers ever encountered. Though few went further to report that older drivers still have some self-control and easily adjusted when cautioned and always say that they were sometimes carried away by youthful nostalgia but has already passed the age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Behaviour Experienced</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Excess speed</td>
<td>Alcoholic, quest to make more money lack of exposure, little or no education, impatience, mood (especially leaving home without happiness), upbringing, disorganized nature of the sector, social status.</td>
<td>Very common</td>
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<td>* Claiming wrong lane</td>
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<td>* Unnecessary delay without apology</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Abuse especially when giving change or asking for fare</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Threat to beat passenger during misunderstanding</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Threat to beat passengers with charms</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Fight, especially when it involves students/ younger person who is equally impatient</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Unnecessary shouting on passengers</td>
<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Threat to drop passenger off</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Non-refund of passengers’ fare when vehicle break down</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Unnecessary Anger</td>
<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Discomforting passengers with overloading</td>
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Again, some agreed that very few drivers are self-controlled, but these few are regarded as ‘rare-bred’. However, it was generally reported that unprincipled behaviour is commonplace among most drivers of commercial buses across Nigeria. The following establishes the main opinion of the participants about the category of drivers and commonness of unprincipled behaviour among them:
'No good thing can come out of them. They are all the same. I have been dealing with them for more than 15 years and have even witnessed such at different cities outside this place.'

The above further buttressed the reason why participants had already adjusted to any unprincipled behaviour by commercial drivers.

Some of the factors responsible for unprincipled behaviour among drivers as highlighted above include alcoholic drinking which is a major consumption by commercial drivers in the study area. Sales of alcoholic drinks is the order of the day in and around all the commercial transport terminals in the study area and by extension across the country, a condition that is considered as detrimental to safe driving. Participants reported that they are aware of this from the smell that comes from drivers' mouth.

Another factor is quest to make more money. This factor is considered responsible for excessive speed among commercial drivers. This is because most drivers are not owners of their vehicles but are just employed drivers who wanted to make more income for themselves. However, similarly, when engaging in excessive speed, participant reported that drivers often take wrong lane even when it appeared dangerous and unsafe for both the drivers and passengers. A response that captured general attitude of drivers to complaint during excessive speed was given below:

\[\text{Se o ma a wa wa oko naa abi ewo ni ariwo} \text{ (meaning, will you come and drive the vehicle or why are you just making noise)}\]

In another vein, participants reported that behaviours exhibited by drivers at times were perceived to be fallout of displeasure from home. This opinion was captured as follows:

\[\text{I see it as moody at times; transferred aggression especially from family issues (may be a fight with wife or inability to meet some demands at home).}\]

Further, lack of education, social status and exposure were considered also by the participants as other factors of unprincipled behaviour among commercial drivers. Some participants believed that majority of commercial drivers in the study area who are illiterate would have been more urbane in their approach if they had adequate education and exposure. Whereas a participant quickly retorted that exposure was a key factor influencing excessive speed and aggressiveness by drivers. Citing migrating drivers from Lagos as examples, she said:

\[\text{If a driver was formerly in Lagos, all the bad behaviours they acquired there being a bigger city where crime and other misdemeanour are prevalent are often brought with them to this place. ‘They do not send anybody’}.\]

The above, better interpreted, means that, sometimes, exposure may not necessarily translate to good conduct. In this regard, drivers who are migrants from bigger cities tend to exhibit bad traits acquired from their previous locations. Second sentence in the previous excerpt implies that those drivers do not care whose horse is gored.

In addition, the informal nature of commercial transport service in the study area was also attributed to the unprincipled behaviour by drivers. Generally, in the study area, and by extension in Nigeria, public transport service especially the urban road transport service is, in terms of operation, management and supervision, left in the hands of private individuals who later formed various registered associations for them to operate within the law and regulations of the land without being necessarily under any governmental control. This situation was considered as a factor by the participants whose opinions were summed up as thus:

\[\text{Their (drivers) behaviour is widespread because they are not organized. Government does not exercise any control over them. No rules and ethics or code of conducts. Even their so called union does not have control over them.}\]

D. Impact on Safe Driving

Participants were asked of the implication of drivers’ behaviour on safe driving. This question is significant especially considering the rate of road traffic accidents associated with road transport and concerns of the advocates of sustainable development agenda at reducing road danger. It was generally agreed that unprincipled behaviour by drivers has significant implications on safety during driving. Participants opinions were summarized in two excerpts provided below:

\[\text{When drivers are over speeding and you control them, they will not listen to you. If you continue to argue with them, they tend to lose control and may cause accident if the situation is not properly managed.}\]

\[\text{Ti awako ba n binu tori ede aiyede laarin oun ati ero, ohun ko hun i’o le sele o’! O lewu fun awako ati ero paapaa. (Meaning, when drivers are angry because of misunderstanding with passengers, anything can happen. It has safety implication for both the drivers and passengers).}\]

E. Suggestions on How to Manage Drivers’ Behaviour

Participants were asked on possible ways of managing drivers’ behaviour especially knowing that informal public transport provides the only means of mobility for commuters, both within and outside the study area and that the two parties (drivers and commuters) will continue to have seemingly unending interface. Participants’ responses were divided between three opinions as provided below:
Government should have some level of control over them, at least by setting up monitoring commission which will be overseeing their activities especially as relating to social conduct.

The excerpt above advocated for government intervention and control by ensuring the establishment of a commission that oversees commercial drivers’ activities. This formed a general opinion of the participants.

Maybe if commuters have a complaint bureau where discontent experienced from unethical behaviour of drivers can be reported, such attitude may be contained a bit.

The above suggested a complaint bureau which will provide avenue for commuters to lodge their grievances for possible redress. This was equally suggested by few of the participants as complementing the first opinion.

Forget it! (Intending forget about it!). Government cannot do anything about them. How many government officials or their family members take public transport? Everybody should just mind his business. Just get used to it and go your way and if you can get your own car, go ahead.

The third opinion given above was a personal opinion by one of the participants which, according to him, was borne out of his understanding of government apathy to public issues especially those that do not have direct bearing on government business. This perhaps may underscore the widespread of unprincipled behaviour among commercial drivers across the country as opined earlier by one of the participants.

V. DISCUSSION

This study was carried out with the purpose of evaluating commuters’ disposition to commercial drivers’ unprincipled behaviour in the study area. This is significant because of the need to encourage public transport patronage, reduce private ownership of cars which has potential to reduce congestion and emission. The result of the study shows that informal public transports form major means of mobility in the study area as majority of the participants in different categories of endeavours use public transport for at least three times in a week. This finding establishes findings of previous studies that public transport forms popular traffic mode in developing countries of the world (Deng and Nelson, 2011; Zhang & Gao, 2008). Results further reveals that all the participants have experienced unprincipled behaviour from commercial public transport drivers at one time or the other and would prefer to own personal means of mobility at least to avoid discontent encountered from drivers of public transport. The experience of unprincipled behaviour and desire to own private means of mobility is in consonance with Stafford (2003), who opined that travelling in public transport significantly increases the degree of potential exposure to crime and anti-social behaviour compared to private transport. By inference, it is also aligning with finding that unreliable conditions and feeling of uncertainties associated with public transport in the developing countries may encourage users to shift to more reliable modes of travel whenever possible (Susilo and Joewono, 2016). Estimating factors of unprincipled behaviour by drivers, report of alcoholic drinking by drivers as one of the factors of unprincipled behaviour is in line with findings that identified alcoholic as one of two risky behaviours selected in China with its obvious impacts on the road (Bhallal et al., 2013; Jia et al., 2015b; Li et al., 2012a).

Further, moody state caused by perceived displeasure from home issues, though could not be measured or determined from participants’ responses, cannot be totally dissociated from the factors of unprincipled behaviour. This is because, numerous factors which are internal to drivers have been considered as contributing to aggressive behaviour by drivers (Groeger, 1997; Novaco, 1991). Participants report of the informal and poorly coordinated nature of the sector as a cause of unprincipled behaviours among drivers could be justifying Susilo (2014), Susilo and Joewono (2016) findings that most public transport in the developing countries are loosely regulated and offering lower level of service with great feelings of uncertainty for users.

The report by some of the participants that they feel insecure especially when threatened by drivers to beat them or inflict charms on them has implication for personal security and safety while travelling. Such feelings can be correlated with the same felt by public transport users who are vulnerable to terrorist attack or indecent assault which have great implication for safety and security and travel behaviour of individuals (Pologlou et al., 2010; Smith and Clarke, 2000). The excerpt that expressed participants’ fear of accident as one of the potential outcomes of unprincipled behaviours of drivers especially when such behaviour is contended by any passenger attests to findings of some behavioural studies that correlated personality factors, aggressive driving with risky driving outcomes (Chraif, et al., 2015; Beck, et al., 2014). Specifically, where such action degenerates into anger, it confirms study by Roidl et al., (2013) that greater anger has consistently been found to be predictive of a breadth of risky driving behaviour such as excessive speed, another risky behaviour considered to lead to higher frequency of road fatalities (Zuckerman, 1996; Huth, Füssl, & Risser, 2014).

VI. CONCLUSION

This study presented a scenario of commercial drivers’ unprincipled behaviour and the feeling of discontent by commuters. The study aimed to contribute to studies on factors that may discourage the use of public transport especially informal commercial buses which in turn may trigger increasing ownership of private cars in the study area. Findings revealed that commuters are generally discontent with commercial drivers based on their unrefined behaviours. Unprincipled behaviour such as abuse, threat to beat commuters, alcoholism, excessive speed, fight with
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commuters, unnecessary anger, among others, were generally found with most of the drivers and were often considered as intransigent to the drivers and inured by commuters. This is so, because commuters had no bureau to channel their complaints, the unions under which these drivers operate are seen as a proverbial cobra whose progenies are all venomous and government which is expected to regulate their activities is aloof in matters of commercial public drivers. However, commuters’ greatest desire is to have their own means of mobility should they have the opportunity. The implication is that owning personal means of mobility by discontent commuters portends a great challenge to achieving sustainable development policy of decreasing car use in cities through the encouragement of public transport patronage. This study recommends that government, as a local partner of advocate of sustainable development policy should see it as a duty to regulate activities of commercial drivers especially by creating a complaint bureau empowered to sanction any commercial drivers with reported case of unprincipled behaviour towards commuters. Also, commercial drivers should be subjected to training on social and behavioural ethics that will foster interpersonal relations among drivers and commuters. However, further research may be needed to unearth commuters’ behaviours and feelings of discontent among drivers in order to have a balanced perspective of interpersonal relation between drivers and commuters.

REFERENCES