

An Analysis of Labour Migration among Okada Riders in Rural Areas in Niger North District of Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Improving security has remained a herculean task for government at all levels in Nigeria. In a bid to improve security in Niger State, the State government-imposed ban on the operations of commercial motorcyclists (Okada) in the Niger State capital and its environs due to the instrumentality of motorcycles in the operations of criminals such as bandits and kidnapers. While the ban can be applauded for reducing criminality within the State capital, Minna; its far-reaching implications for the growing insecurity in the rural areas have scarcely been investigated. Using a cross-sectional survey design, this study sampled 408 Okada riders across seven purposively selected communities in four local government areas of the State to unearth the pattern of migration among Okada riders and the attendant security implications for the new destinations of the riders. The push-pull theory was utilized to provide theoretical framework for the study. The findings revealed dominance of migrant riders in the rural areas who have migrated from mostly urban areas due to imposition of ban and the growing insecurity in their former locations. Okada riding serves as full-time job for many of the riders and hence they prefer to change environment than to change occupation. Consequently, the study highlights some security implications for the growing number of migrant riders in the rural areas. Among other things, the study suggests relaxation of Okada ban in the cities as a way to decongest the rural areas and forestall the emergence of greater security threats.

Keywords: Labour Migration, Okada Riders, Rural Areas, Push and Pull Theory, Niger State

Introduction

Nigeria's security situation can be described as fragile and uncertain owing to a plethora of security challenges which have overwhelmed the country's security apparatus. From Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast; banditry and kidnapping in the northwest; cattle rustling, farmers-herders conflict, as well as banditry and kidnapping in north-central Nigeria; Nigeria's security challenges have largely remained adamant to the kinetic remedial approaches adopted to decimate it (Obi, 2015). The situation has deteriorated and citizens live by the dictates of non-state actors who have violently established control over certain areas in the country. Northern Nigeria is worse hit by this "National Disaster" as the menace of banditry and kidnapping in the region continues unabated. In some cases, taxes are imposed on the communities by bandits as a condition for peace in many troubled communities (Maruf, 2021). While the Boko Haram insurgency affects the north eastern region of Nigeria, banditry and kidnapping are most common in the northwestern region and some parts of the north-central region. A striking feature of bandits' operations which has left many questions unanswered is their large numbers and the use of motorcycles. They attack in hundreds and riding on bikes carrying 2 to 3 persons each (Ele, 2021). This strategy has been used by bandits in several operations where hundreds of people have been kidnapped. Thus, large numbers of motorcycles have become symbols of terror in the minds of many.

To stem the tide of banditry and other forms of criminality especially in northern Nigeria, many State governments have imposed ban on Okada (commercial motorcycle) operations. This is due to the frequent use of motorcycles in attacks across the region. While the regime on Okada ban started from Borno State when the Boko Haram insurgency worsened, it gradually extended to other parts of the country. This one-bullet approach to stemming the growing tide of insecurity in Northern Nigeria is yet to produce desired result as the security situation in most States remains very fragile. It is pertinent to note that while imposing the ban on Okada activities, authorities concerned may have been oblivious of the role the ban may play in fuelling new waves of security challenges. With about 10 million registered riders (Olanrewaju, 2020) most of whom are youths with little or no formal education; Okada riders may serve as manpower pool for perpetrators of organised crimes such as banditry and kidnapping if they are forced out of business.

Therefore, it may not come as a surprise that the increasing trend in Okada ban in northern Nigeria has coincided with a steady increase in cases of kidnap-for-ransom (K4R) especially in northern Nigeria. Between 2014 and 2023, the number of people reportedly have risen from 897 in 2014 to 4,243 in 2023 (Nigeria Security Tracker, 2024). Angalapu (2024) notes that 24% of all abductions in 2023 in Nigeria occurred in the North-Central region with Niger State taking the lead in mass abductions. Despite banning Okada operations since 2013, insecurity continues to thrive in the State with mass abductions in the State hitting the national dailies very frequently. The State has witnessed renewed violence especially in its rural suburbs leading to the displacement of more than 50,000 residents (Ahmad, 2021). While the ban is expected to end the security challenges in the State, the situation has not only persisted, but worsened.

In view of the forgoing narrative, a correlation between the two phenomena (Okada ban and rural insecurity) may be inexcusable. Reasons for this assumption are that Okada riders are majorly youths with little or no formal education who are very prone to migration especially to locations with booming markets where they can generate earnings equivalent of their previous locations (Aliyu, 2022). While most cities have taken to banning Okada business in the city centres, most riders are likely to shift to other terrains in need of their services which can pay equivalent or higher their earnings. The search for new locations and opportunities may open up criminal opportunities to the riders. For instance, in the case of banditry and kidnapping, the forcefully retired Okada riders could key into the value chain such as informants, motorcycle technicians and riders, food vendors, foot soldiers, drugs suppliers, etc. The likelihood of this relationship justifies the need for a scientific investigation. Despite this urgent need, this study notes paucity of research works on Okada ban especially in northern Nigeria despite the widespread imposition of the ban in the region for over a decade. These developments call the attention of this study to investigate the phenomenon of Okada ban and its security implication for rural areas in Niger north district of Niger State.

Objectives of the Study

The general aim of this study is to examine the security implications of labour migration among Okada riders in Niger North District of Niger State. Thus, the specific objectives of this study are:

- i. To examine the socio-demographic characteristics of Okada riders in Niger North Senatorial District.
- ii. To examine the pattern of labour migration among Okada riders in Niger North Senatorial District.
- iii. To identify alternative occupational preferences among migrant Okada riders in Niger North Senatorial District.

- iv. To identify the common crimes reported due to labour migration of Okada riders in Niger North Senatorial District.

Conceptual Framework

Okada Business in Nigeria

In Nigeria, commercial motorcycles operations, commonly referred to as Okada, are popular means of transportation especially in cities with challenges of high traffic (Olubomehin, 2012; Abdussalam & Wahab, 2014). Many commuters wishing to avoid city traffic jams prefer them to conventional taxis. The evolution of Okada is traced to Calabar and Adamawa States in 1970s at a time when economic hardships entangled most of the working-class citizens in the country (Solomon, 2018). Since then, the business has grown steadily and employs an estimated 10 million riders (Olanrewaju, 2020). The occupation provides an escape route from poverty for many youths who are unemployed (Arosanyin, 2010). As such, it is presumed that its continued existence in Nigeria today is not unconnected with the economic hardships being faced by the citizens, mostly the youths. This explains why youths constitute the largest percentage of riders.

Occupational Displacement and Labour Migration among Okada Riders

Occupation refers to any legitimate act carried out in order to make a living. Crepeau, Cohn, and Schell (2003) conceptualize occupation as the day-to-day engagements of people which enable them sustain themselves, contribute to the life of their families, and to participate in the broader society. Occupations are considered to be professions, employments or even self-employments which individuals engage in to make a living. Occupations can be formal or informal in nature. Okada business typifies an informal sectors engagement due to the nature of their operations which has little or no government support; and it requires little or no formal education. It is known to be a major employer of the uneducated population and the educated but unemployed (Arosanyin, 2010).

The rising spate of insecurity, especially in northern Nigeria, has implicated the Okada industry. This is due to the frequent use of motorcycles by bandits and kidnapers (Orjinmo, 2020). Motorcycles, when sighted in large numbers, symbolize violence and this strikes fear in the minds of the innocent and vulnerable citizens. Further to this, demands for ransom by kidnappers usually include some specified number of motorcycles as condition for the release of captives. This development has prompted the ban on use of motorcycles for commercial purpose and in some cases, even private use (Ele, 2021). This study conceives the resultant displacement of Okada riders by virtue of the imposition of ban as *occupational displacement*. The ban on Okada activities forces the riders to relocate to other places where they can continue their business.

In order to continue their business, Okada riders search for new locations where their services are in demand. The movement to such new locations signifies *labour migration*. The nature of their migration remains scarcely documented due to dearth of research on the migration pattern of Okada riders after displacement. While it is common to read reports of Okada riders trooping to cities for business, movement in the opposite direction has not been ascertained since the commencement of ban imposition on Okada riders across cities in northern Nigeria. This research aims to bridge the knowledge gap through an assessment of the migration pattern of the riders after imposition of bans.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the push and pull theory of migration. Lee (1966) proposed a comprehensive theory of migration where he explained factors influencing the decision to migrate as follows:

- a. Factors associated with the place of origin (push factors)
- b. Factors associated with the place of destination (Pull factors)
- c. Intervening obstacles
- d. Personal factors

According to Lee, a place may possess a set of positive and negative factors and the presence of such factors influence decisions to migrate. For him, positive factors act to hold people within and also attract people from other areas. Examples of these positive (pull factors) include security, favourable working conditions, political and religious freedom, respect for human right, presence of social amenities, etc. The negative tends to force people out of a region and discourage others from coming. Examples include poor working conditions, political and religious persecutions, violation of human rights, insecurity, among others. Therefore, migration is the net interplay between the factors in addition to intervening obstacles and personal factors.

Although, the push factors initiate the thought of migration in people and the pull factors influence the destination people have in mind, decision to migrate is further affected by the intervening obstacles and personal factors. Intervening obstacles are factors or barriers that can prevent migration or at least make it more difficult for people to undertake. Examples include distance of the destination, transport difficulties, lack of money to migrate, etc. If the intervening obstacles are overcome, then personal factors ultimately determine the decision to migrate. The personal factors such as age, sex, race, awareness, intelligence, contacts, and cultural milieu of the individual.

The push and pull theory are adopted as the theoretical framework given its relevance in explaining the variables of this study. Okada riders usually seek alternative locations in the event of an unfavourable conditions prevalent in a particular location of operation such as the urban areas. The unfavourable conditions include insecurity, imposition of ban, and displacement by taskforce among other barriers to smooth operation in the urban areas. In a bid to escape such unpleasant factors, many Okada riders prefer to relocate to other locations believed to be more favourable. Therefore, the factors driving the Okada riders to relocate qualify as the push factors. Locations which attract the migrating riders are locations with favourable working conditions such as freedom to work without ban, improved security, and better income-generating opportunities. Such places (usually rural in nature) with more attractive conditions attract riders by virtue of the pull factors present in such locations. Thus, the interplay of push and pull factors are responsible for the migration of Okada riders in the study area.

Similarly, personal factors such as age, and ownership of motorcycle may further influence the decision to move from one location to another. This is because most Okada riders are youths who are still energetic and can move far distances with relative ease especially with their possession of motorcycles. These personal allows Okada riders to easily surmount challenges that may be posed by intervening obstacles such as distance.

Although the theory provides valuable insight on why people migrate and the reasons for their destinations, it fails to account for involuntary migrants such as wives and children whose decision to migrate is not independent. Nevertheless, the theory is important in this discourse

because it provides insight on why riders who are not dependents choose to migrate and where they decide to migrate to.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Niger North Senatorial District of Niger State using survey research design. Niger North is the most affected by banditry and kidnapping activities in Niger State. A cross-section of Okada riders in seven communities was done. The communities were purposively sampled across four Local Government areas namely Borgu, Mashegu, Magama and Kontagora due to the high presence of Okada riders. The communities are Dogon Gari, Wawa, and New Bussa in Borgu Local Government Area; Nasarawa and Auna in Magama Local Government Area, Sabon Pegi in Mashegu Local Government Area; and Kontagora in Kontagora Local Government Area. In Borgu LGA, 57 riders were selected from Dogon Gari Unit. While 32 and 39 riders were selected from Wawa and New Bussa Units respectively. 52 riders were sampled in Sabon Pegi (Mashegu LGA). In Magama LGA, 65 and 43 riders were sampled from Nasarawa and Auna Units respectively. A total of 120 riders were sampled from Kontagora metropolis in Kontagora LGA. Mixed method was used in the process of data collection. Structured questionnaires were administered on Okada riders, while in-depth interviews were held with stakeholder such as Heads of Okada riders associations, security personnel, motorcycle spare parts dealers, motorcycle technicians, and food vendors. Quantitative data collected were coded in Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS version 23) and analysis was done and presented via the use of descriptive statistical tools such as frequency tables and charts; while thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data.

Results of the Findings

Table 1: Socio-demographic Data of the Respondents

| Sex | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Male | 408 | 100 |
| Female | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
| 18-25 | 148 | 36.3 |
| 26-32 | 116 | 28.4 |
| 33-40 | 100 | 24.5 |
| 41-48 | 44 | 10.8 |
| Total | 408 | 100 |
| Residential Status | Frequency | Percentage |
| Native | 104 | 25.5 |
| Settler | 304 | 74.5 |
| Total | 408 | 100 |
| Motorcycle Ownership | Frequency | Percentage |
| Owned by rider | 272 | 66.7 |
| On higher purchase | 76 | 18.6 |
| On daily return | 60 | 14.7 |
| Total | 408 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' Survey 2024

The socio-demographic data of the respondents is given Table 1. From the table, it can be seen that all respondents are male which affirms the general belief that the Okada business is a male-dominated business. About 90% of the respondents were below the age of 40 years majority (36.3%) of who were between 18 and 25 years old. This goes to show that the Okada business is also youth-dominated. The domination of male youths in the Okada industry may not be divorced from the fact that the job is physically demanding and may not be easily undertaken

by females or the elderly. Therefore, it is common to find mostly youths engaged in the business.

Furthermore, majority (74.5%) of the respondents are settlers in their communities of operation. The percentage of migrant riders observed in the communities studied were very high as the Okada industry in such communities were seen to be driven by the settler-riders. Reasons for the high rate of settler-riders may not be unconnected with the mounting pressure in their places of origin such as the ban on their operations or even growing insecurity. During an in-depth interview with one of the executives of the riders' association, he explained that the number of riders in the community have been on the increase especially from other northern States of Nigeria. Specifically, he noted Zamfara State as having the largest number of riders in his unit. He attributes the increasing number of Zamfara riders to the growing insecurity in the State. Similarly, a secretary to the riders' association in another community affirms the foregoing submission thus:

“When we take the native-settler percentage of riders in this community, settlers take 99% while we take 1%. Despite the large number of riders in this community, native riders are not up to 20. The reason for this influx of migrant riders is because there are villages in the interior whose geographical terrain here does not allow for easy movement of goods by cars and other big vehicles. Therefore, bikes are the easiest and most reliable option. So, here we have the market for riders to prosper.”

The above excerpts provide clarity for why there are high number of migrant riders. With regard to ownership of the motorcycle used by riders, majority of the respondents (66.7%) alluded to ownership of the motorcycles they use. Nevertheless, 18.6% were on higher purchase agreements while 14.7% were on return of daily balance to the owners of the motorcycles. The high rate of ownership of motorcycles can be attributed to the high returns accruable from the business which makes the purchase of motorcycles relatively easy for many of the riders. Again, on higher purchase agreements, some riders are able to acquire their motorcycles with ease as well. To confirm the sufficiency of earnings from the Okada riding business, one of the interviewees (a chairman of the riders' association) submits thus:

“Only few businesses (with very strong financial base) can compete with the Okada riding business because the business is very lucrative. A rider can compete financially with many market men. If a rider remits N15,000.00 weekly on higher purchase, aside his own benefits, then you should know how lucrative the business is. In fact, some riders collect 2 motorcycles on higher purchase and they conveniently meet up with their obligations.”

Furthermore, the ownership of motorcycles contributes to the ease of migration from one place to another. This is because a rider cannot change location without the permission of the owner of the motorcycle. But when the motorcycle is owned by him, there is no need for such permission before migration is undertaken. Therefore, ownership of motorcycle is a strong factor influencing migration.

Table 2: Migration of Okada riders

| Places of Work Experience | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Only the community | 140 | 34.3 |
| Within Niger State | 110 | 27.0 |
| Outside Niger State | 158 | 38.7 |
| Total | 408 | 100 |
| Reasons for Migration | Frequency | Percentage |
| Okada Ban | 122 | 45.5 |
| Desire for more profit | 36 | 13.4 |
| Insecurity in former location | 98 | 36.6 |
| Ease of operations | 8 | 3.0 |
| Other reasons | 4 | 1.5 |
| Total | 268 | 100 |
| Area of Relocation | Frequency | Percentage |
| Rural area | 98 | 36.6 |
| Urban area | 170 | 63.4 |
| Total | 268 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' Survey 2024

To understand the trend in migration among the Okada riders in the study area, the study assessed places where the riders had worked before their present location. 34.3% had not worked anywhere other than their community of origin. 65.7% had worked elsewhere before their present location. 27% worked within Niger State while 38.7% worked in other States other than Niger State. This implies that most of the riders were migrants and most of them migrated from outside the State as already presented in Table 1. Reasons for their migration to the present locations were probed and imposition of Okada ban coupled with growing insecurity in their former locations were the major drivers of migration among the riders as submitted by 45.5% and 36.6% of the respondents respectively. In addition, some of the respondents migrated to their present location due to the ease of doing business in the new destination.

The opinion of respondents was sought on the classification of their immediate past location of duty as either rural or urban. In response, majority (63.4%) of the respondents described their former locations as urban compared to their present location while 36.6% rated their former locations as rural compared to their present location. This suggests the existence of an urban-rural drift among the riders occasioned by imposition of Okada ban and growing insecurity in the former places of work by the riders. Similarly, there is a trend of rural-rural drift among riders seeking to escape insecurity and improve their earnings.

Table 3: Occupational choices of Okada riders

| Okada as Primary Occupation | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes | 320 | 78.4 |
| No | 88 | 21.6 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Other Occupations of choice | Frequency | Percentage |
| Farming | 264 | 90.4 |
| Trading | 12 | 4.1 |
| Artisan | 4 | 1.4 |
| Others | 12 | 4.1 |
| Total | 292 | 100 |

Source: Researchers' Survey 2024

Respondents were asked questions on whether Okada riding was their major occupation or not. 78.4% of the respondents took to Okada riding as their major occupation while 21.6% were not majorly Okada riders. They were more or less part time riders who take advantage of ownership of motorcycle to earn additional income. Nevertheless, 90.4% also combined Okada riding

with other forms of economic activities predominantly farming. The reasons for high rate of farming activities among the respondents may not be unconnected with the fact that a lot of the study areas are known to have vast fertile lands where crops production can be done with relative ease.

Crimes which have been commonly reported in the study area are illustrated in figure 1.

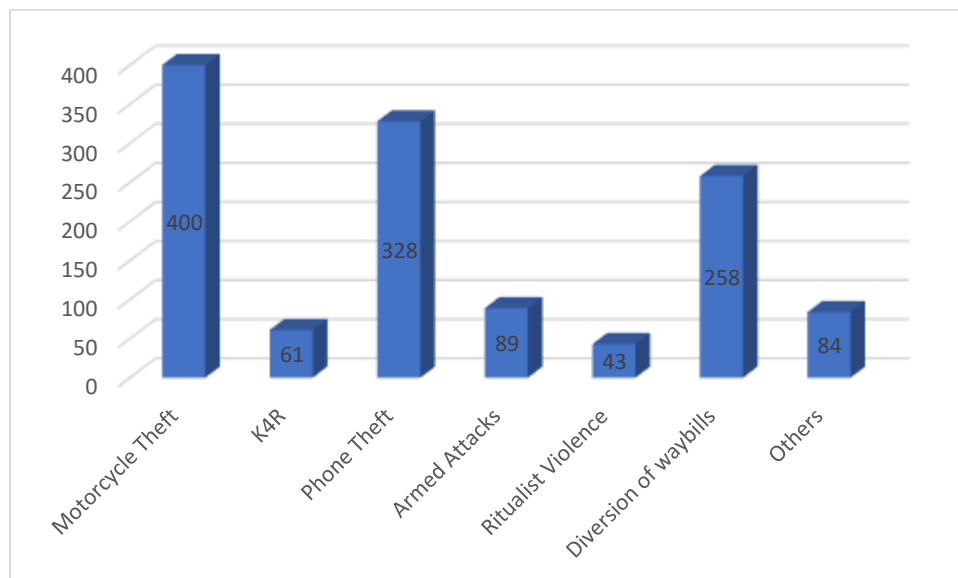


Figure 1: Common Crimes Reported Due to Labour Migration of Okada Riders in Niger North Senatorial District

Source: Researchers' Survey 2024

The prevalence of the crimes illustrated in figure 1 indicates “Motorcycle Theft” as the most prevalent crime in the study areas. The stealing of motorcycles is common to all the areas under study. Afterwards, theft of mobile phones constitutes another major crime in the study areas. The diversion of goods owned mostly by market women has been reported in most communities studied. Other forms of crimes recorded in the study areas include some cases of kidnap-for-ransom, armed attacks on riders, abduction of people and mutilation of body parts of victims by suspected ritualists, commercial sex work, and use of hard drugs. The forgoing crimes may not be completely unrelated to the growing number of Okada riders in the area. For instance, the theft of motorcycles is not possible where there are no motorcycles. Hence, the presence of motorcycles attracts criminals who are interested in stealing motorcycles. Similarly, the report on the armed attacks stems from violent attempt at stealing motorcycles. In an in-depth interview with one of the Heads of the Okada riders, the following submissions were made:

“Usually, the thieves lure young riders, especially those who are new to the town, to the outskirts where they forcefully collect their bikes. In some cases, they even kill our riders. When it peaked, there used to be about 3 to 5 cases every week.”

He further explains how this happens thus:

“The thieves with the intent to snatch motorcycle are usually in pairs. They stop a rider and mention a place (usually outskirts of town) they want to go. On reaching places with little or no passers-by, one of them strangles the rider while the other takes control of the motorcycle. They strangle the rider to death or injure him with weapons such as knives and daggers.”

The prevalence of these attacks varies across the study areas as some of the riders' association too proactive steps to curb the menace while others only reacted after incidences are reported.

Discussion of Findings

Findings are discussed as per the objectives of the study. The findings from the study indicate that majority of the riders in the study areas are migrants mostly from other States. Most of them have relocated from other northern States of Nigeria such as Zamfara, Kebbi, Jigawa, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Kaduna, Yobe, Adamawa, and Lagos. Thus, a significant proportion of Okada riders have relocated from urban areas to rural areas while other relocate from more remote settings (rural areas) to the study areas. The urban-rural drift of the riders is primarily influenced by some push factors namely: the ban on commercial motorcycle operations in the cities and other states of the federation; the persistence of insecurity in some of the urban areas; and the difficulty in operating in the affected urban areas due to harassment and extortion from law enforcement agencies, and possible confiscation of motorcycles. Similarly, the study closely analysed and examined the data on the push factors influencing migration from the remote rural areas. Rural-rural drift was majorly influenced by insecurity in the remote villages, and the desire to improve earnings. Riders in remote villages were vulnerable to bandits' attacks who target their motorcycles for their criminal acts. Hence, such riders consider the study locations to be safer places to operate.

Furthermore, the pull factors can be inferred from the push factors given that they are the opposite of the push factors highlighted in Table 2. The pull factors were very vital to attracting Okada riders. A Chairman of one of the communities submit that the topographical nature of the community is what makes the Okada riding business lucrative in the area. He further submit that, there are many villages in the interior which are usually inaccessible for cars. As such, bikes are the easiest option to convey people and goods especially on market day. From his submission, it can be inferred that the geography of the study areas is also a pull factor.

The pull factors have attracted so many riders from different parts of the country especially the northern region. Riders come from almost all states of the north. Specifically, another Head of Okada Riders in Borgu LGA notes that there are riders in the community from across most northern states of Nigeria such as Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto, Lagos, Jigawa, Maiduguri, Adamawa, and Kaduna States. However, he added that riders from Zamfara and Kebbi States are the most dominant. This submission is also affirmed in the submission of another Head of Okada riders in Magama Local Government where he said 99% of their riders are migrants and are predominantly from Kebbi State. From the foregoing discussion, the specific drivers of migration are ban on commercial motorcycle operations, insecurity (in all its ramifications); topography of the destination communities, and desire for more profit. These drivers have made the migration among Okada riders in Niger North a common occurrence. Specifically, urban-rural migration was the most common among the respondents.

Secondly, the occupational preferences of the riders were also examined and majority of the riders reported the commercial riding as their primary occupation. Although a significant percentage combined Okada riding with farming, majority were full time riders who did not venture into any other activity other than riding. This explains why many of the riders prefer to change location than to quit the Okada riding business. Similarly, with the high rate of ownership of motorcycles by the riders, a major intervening obstacle to migration would have been addressed. Therefore, it is relatively easy for them to relocate to other places where they can continue to operate than take up alternative occupation. It is also instructive to note that the presence of the activities of bandits in the rural areas have severely affected farming activities. And so, most of the riders would not choose to leave riding for farming given the danger involved. Moreover, the personal factors of the riders such as age, ownership of bike

can easily facilitate moving from one location to another. Riders find it easier to move around states in the northern region than to stick to one place.

Lastly, the security implication of the Okada riders' migration on the rural areas was determined. Common crimes reported in the community were examined and the far-reaching implications were identified. The most common criminal activity reported is the theft of motorcycles. Although with slight improvement in communities such as Kontagora and Nasarawa, the theft of motorcycles has continued unabated across all the communities studied. It is possible that the theft of motorcycle serves to feed the criminal cycle of bandits and kidnappers who use them for operations. Furthermore, the attack on riders and forceful seizing of their bikes by criminal elements which has claimed the lives of many Okada riders in the communities under study demonstrate how desperate the beneficiaries of motorcycle theft are towards sustaining the criminal activity. The manifestation of killing for bike attests to the emergence of violent crimes which may not be divorced from the concentration of riders in the areas. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the heavy presence of Okada riders has led to the emergence of the syndicates specialized in the snatching and forceful seizure of bikes from Okada riders.

During an interview with one of the security personnel, he reported that on the average, about five bike thefts are reported on weekly basis. While some are recovered, others are usually not. Again, the assembly of Okada riders in a place usually leads to the emergence of new waves of criminality such as use of hard/illicit drugs, and emergence of violent conflicts. Although this study has not reported the substantial emergence of the foregoing crimes, several cases of phone theft, ritual killings, and diversion of goods belonging to market women has been reported and attributed to presence of increasing number of riders in the communities.

Therefore, the security of the rural areas, especially where there are heavy concentration of the Okada riders, may be compromised if adequate arrangement is not made to check the influx of all manners of riders in the communities. It is pertinent to note that imposition of ban on Okada riders in the cities only causes a redistribution of their numbers in the available rural areas where their services could yield equivalent or higher returns. This is in conformity with the report of Aliyu (2022). As such, it implies a redistribution of the criminalities that the governments seek to curtail in the urban areas.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Okada riders in the study areas are predominantly migrants whose influx to the study area is driven by the push factors of Okada ban, and growing insecurity, coupled with pull factors of better profit opportunities and favourable working conditions. The migration of the riders is hinged on the fact that Okada riding is their primary occupation which can hardly be replaced by another occupation given its income potentials. The migration of Okada riders have introduced new waves of crimes and insecurity particularly theft of motorcycle, phones and diversions of goods. The most common crime which is theft of motorcycle may serve to feed other criminalities such as banditry and kidnapping. Therefore, the migration of Okada riders must be checked in order to prevent or forestall the eventual collapse of the security architecture of rural areas.

Recommendations

To improve security in the rural areas, the paper makes the following recommendations:

- i. There is urgent need to enhance the security architecture in rural areas of Niger North District through proper surveillance and monitoring by security operatives, and reporting of migrant riders whose motives may compromise safety of lives and properties of rural

- dwellers. Through synergy between Okada riders' association and security agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), and Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), proactive measures for crime detection and efficient response can be designed.
- ii. The State government should consider the option of lifting the ban imposed on the Okada riders in the cities to allow for decongestion of the rural suburbs of Niger North District which has become over concentrated with migrant riders seeking new locations for operations. If the ban is lifted, it would help to redistribute the number of Okada riders among the rural and urban areas of Niger North District conveniently.
 - iii. In their various places of operation, Okada riders should be properly profiled to ease identification of legitimate riders and differentiate them from unscrupulous elements who have continued to victimize Okada riders and unsuspecting members of the public.
 - iv. Government support should be extended to the Okada industry to serve as a youth empowerment initiative in order to cater for the teaming unemployed youths whose productivity might have been affected by the imposition of ban on Okada riders.
 - v. The interest of Okada riders in farming should be explored, encouraged and supported by government at all levels. Supports such as provision of seeds, fertilizer, and farm inputs, can attract more riders to farming thereby making them diversify their income potentials and also helping in achieving food security among other things in Niger North District and the country at large.

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