

Abolition of Commercial Motorbikes and Its Implication on Transportation and Criminality in Calabar Metropolis

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Abstract

The study examined the abolition of commercial motorbikes and its implications on transportation and criminality in Calabar Metropolis. The main objective of the study was to assess the implications associated with the abolition of commercial motorbikes as a means of transport and its effect on criminality in Calabar Metropolis. To achieve this objective, the study elicited data through questionnaire from 984 randomly selected respondents. Simple percentages and chi-square were employed to analyze elicited data at 0.05 levels of significance. The findings revealed that factors such as upsurge in criminal activities, rise in traffic accidents, traffic congestion and recklessness on the part of the operators of commercial motorbikes among others account for the abolition of motorbikes as a means of transportation in Calabar Metropolis. The study findings also revealed that the abolition of commercial motorbikes resulted in the delay of workers getting vehicles to their workplaces, increased in transportation fare charges and quarrel amongst commuters as they struggle to access few available transport vehicles. Furthermore, the study findings revealed that the abolition has resulted to an increase in criminal activities such as armed robbery, pick-pocketing, theft and snatching of valuables. The study recommends among others: the provision of alternative jobs for the displaced youths who have been affected by the government action, government should partner with private sectors to establish avoidable transport system for the masses and government should ensure that urban taxi cabs maintained approved standard transport fares in all routes to avoid arbitrary and unavoidable charges.

Keywords: abolition, accident, commercial motorcycles, crime, transportation

1. Introduction

The use of motorbikes as means of public transportation all over the world is an old aged thing. In fact, the use of motorbikes as means of public transportation in Nigeria began in Calabar – Cross River State in the 1970s (Adesanaya, 1998). And after the economic recession of Late General Murtala Mohammed administration or 1975/1976 which occasioned the retrenchment of many Nigerian workers, the use of motorbikes as means of transport gained acceptance as many retrenched workers and jobless Nigerian youths found solace in the use of motorbikes as a means of livelihood and employment nationwide. The use of motorbikes as means of public transport has been described as one of the most popular mode of public transportation ever since in Nigeria (Michael, 2010; Sule, 2007; Gbadamosi, 2006).

The proliferation of commercial motorbikes and their use in urban transportation is triggered by the unfriendly socio-economic policies which manifested in the rate of urban unemployment, poverty and decayed social infrastructure (Smith, 2011). More to this, was the inadequate public transport system coupled with high rate of unemployment and relative lucrative nature of the business. All these aided in the emergence of motorcycles as means of public transportation in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced in Nigeria by General Ibrahim Babangida in 1986 further worsened the socio-economic hardship of many workers in urban centers of Nigeria. As a result of this economic policy, many Nigerians workers lost their jobs through retrenchment and cost of vehicle importation skyrocketed while the rail system collapsed. This brought a great burden on the citizens who now have to source for alternative means of survival or livelihood. Hence, Michael (2010) argued that SAP brought

about mass retrenchment and the retrenched workers became commercial motorbike owners or operators and as the economic situation keeps worsening, the number of commercial motorcycle operators keeps increasing. This was manifested in the continuous increase in the registration of motorbikes for commercial purposes in Nigeria. According to Gbadamosi (2006), 218,802 motorcycles were registered in Nigeria in 2001 and in 2002, 227,299 were registered. In 2003, 289,390 motorcycles were registered while 288,474 were registered in 2004 showing however, a decrease of about 69,000 motorcycles registered in 2004. Notwithstanding this, Sule (2007) acknowledged an upward trend in commercial motorcycle registration in Nigeria, but considered its use as misnomer. Michael (2010) observes that urban commuters considered the use of commercial motorcycle in public transport as a blessing in terms of its contributions to the movement of human capital and goods within and across the cities. This was further asserted by Smith (2011), who noted that urban commuters consider the use of commercial motorcycles in public transport as a blessing due to its availability, accessibility, flexibility and relative cost.

Extant literature on the use of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation in Nigeria abounds. For example, Ogunsanya and Galtima (1993), Adesanya (1998), Fasakin (2001; 2000) and Olubomehin (2012) amongst others looked at the use of commercial motorcycle as means of public transportation in Nigeria at different times. We observed that one common trait associated with these studies was their attempt to identify factors that gave rise to the use of motorcycles as means of public transportation in Nigeria. Ogunsanya and Galtima (1993) looked at the use of motorcycles as means of public transportation in Yola town, Adamawa state of Nigeria and saw economic depression and inadequate transport facilities among others as factors that gave rise to the emergence of motorbikes as means of public transportation in Nigeria. Adesanya (1998) study of Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria was focused on the evolution of motorbikes as means of transportation in Nigeria but concentrated on the impact of motorbikes on passengers in terms of fare and safety. Fasakin (2001) study of the use of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation in Akure, Ondo state of Nigeria was focused on the factors affecting the daily profits of commercial motorbike operators while Olubomehin (2012) study was concerned with the historical perspective of motorcycles (Okada) as means of public transportation and its impact on the economy and society with particular reference to Lagos, Nigeria. This present study deviates from the above studies in that it seeks to assess the impact of the abolition of the use of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation on criminality.

It is certain from the above cited studies that the use of motorcycle as means of public transportation has impacted significantly to the economic development of the country. It has created business opportunities to millions of Nigerians especially the youth, retired and retrenched persons. Aside from that, many government workers also engage in commercial motorcycle business either as owners or actual riders after work in order to complement their meager wage. It is of note that some state governments have bought and distributed motorcycles to jobless youths as means of alleviating poverty or creating job in line with the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) as articulated under the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) policy in Nigeria. This was demonstrated by Governor Alao Akala of Oyo State who bought and distributed motorcycles to various individuals in the state as a means of alleviating poverty and creating jobs for the people. In the same way, the government of Borno State bought and distributed 5,000 motorcycles to its citizens to boost public transportation and alleviate poverty (Itodo, 2005 cited in Olubumehin, 2012). It has further contributed to government revenue through registration of plate numbers and motorbikes licensing.

It is vital to stress here that commercial motorbikes is patronized by all and sundry in the society irrespective of the sex or socio-economic status of the individuals especially those who are eager to get to their destination or workplace with minimal delay and waste of time. More so, its availability, relative cost and most especially its accessibility and capacity to maneuvered bad roads, traffic congestions or hold-ups and gets to its destination on time make it an easy alternative for use by members of the public above other means of public transportation.

However, in spite of the avowed benefits and positive impacts the use of motorbikes as means of public transportation has contributed to the socio-economic development of the society, various people have criticized its usage as a result of some identified negative influence associated with it. According to Olubumehin (2012), the expansion in the use of motorbikes as means of public transportation has increased the number of road accidents in the country. It has also led to loss of several lives and in many cases permanent disabilities to victims. In 1989 about 144 cases of Okada accidents were reported in Lagos state. Nnadozie (2009) argued that motorbike riders are involved in extreme violent acts especially by resorting to jungle justice in order to make allowance for their erring members to escape justice especially when dealing with an injured member of the public. Motorbike riders use their motorcycles for criminal activities. It has been estimated that more than

seventy percent of crimes committed in Lagos are traceable to armed bandits operating with motorbikes (<http://www.nigeriannewsworld.com>). One of the authors of this study had been attacked by armed men who use the motorbike for robbery in 2007. It is important to note that most of the attacks on Joint Task Force (JTF) in Northern Nigeria are done by terrorists who use motorbikes to throw bombs on them and also the people in public places. The Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero was recently attacked by armed men who operates with motorbikes and in the process five persons were killed while the Emir was seriously injured.

It is on the strength of these criticisms that some members of the public called for the abolition of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation in Nigeria. In adherence to the demand for its abolition, the use of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation was banned in some states in Nigeria. Just as the use of commercial motorbike as means of public transportation began in Calabar, Cross State, it was also the first state to abolish the use of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation in November 22, 2009. Other states that banned the use of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation include – Abia, Lagos, Borno, Yobe, Rivers, Adamawa, Gombe, Plateau states and Federal Capital Territory - Abuja. However, we have to stress that most abolition of the use of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation in Nigeria and particularly Cross River State are applicable in the State Capitals while they are still operating in the villages.

We have to note that before the abolition of the use of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation in Calabar, Cross River State particularly; there were lots of public debate. Members of the public especially the market women, youths, Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Non-Governmental Agencies (NGO) and the Civil Rights Activists warned the government against such action noting that the consequences it might cause such as poverty, unemployment, crime and hardship on the masses may adversely affect the polity. They argued that if it must be banned, then government must provide adequate alternative to cushion its negative impact. But the professionals – lawyers, doctors, bankers and the highly rich in the society supported its ban as a result of the already stated negative impacts. The members of the State Assembly were divided in their opinion especially the minority parties, while some members wanted it to be banned gradually others wanted it immediately. Some other members argued that government must ensure that adequate alternative provisions are made before its ban. However, while the public debate was still on the floor of the society, the government of Cross River State went ahead and abolished the operation of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation in Calabar metropolis.

The abolition was swiftly criticized by some people who felt government should have allowed for a more public debate on the issue since the decision affects the masses adversely. Gbadamosi (2002; 2005) while acknowledging the problems associated with the proliferation and use of motorbikes for urban transportation such as the involvement of motorbike riders in violence and non-compliance to traffic regulations argued that these were not substantial reasons for its abolition because urban violence often involves both pedestrian and cab drivers. Chioma (2011) is of the opinion that government took the decision without considering the social and economic harm of the decision to the generality of the masses. In fact, Chukwu, Okey, Boco and Oko (2008) maintain that government often formulate and implement policies without adequate consultation with the people or other stakeholders while Osez-Laugley (2005) contends that this top-bottom approach of government in addressing socio-economic problems has created more social problems than solved the existing problems. Some scholars also argued that government should have made alternative provisions to cushion the aftermath effects of the abolition before embarking on its decision (Nwaorgu, 2012; Adeleye, 2011; Adeniji, 1987).

It is imperative for us to mention that about 2 million urban commuters in some major cities of Nigeria are affected by this ban, as affordable and accessible transport involving the use of urban cab is beyond their reach (Bassey, 2010). Akpan (2012) has argued that the abolition of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation has compounded the existing urban transportation problem. This is because commuters often struggle at peak periods for commercial vehicles to convey them in or out of their workplace (Ikeano & Akinrolabu, 1991). And this is worsened by excessive charges, bad roads, inadequate commercial vehicles, multiple levies on cab drivers by government officials, frequent conflict involving cab and tricycle drivers, road congestion amongst others as witnessed daily (Ekpenyong, 2006, Akpan, 2012).

From the above aftermath criticisms of the abolition of the use of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation, it will be observed that the abolition has not solved the urban social and transportation problems as urban population of the cities has continued to grow exponentially without a corresponding increase in the means of transportation (Chioma, 2010). We acknowledge the fact that government introduced the use of tricycle as means of public transportation as an alternative but this did not solve the public transportation problem neither did it provide the require employment to displaced persons nor reduced poverty level in the society rather it

created more social problems. Several man-hours are now lost on daily basis as commuters spend several hours on dilapidated motor ways, while struggle and quarrel among commuters are witnessed on daily basis, as they scramble for the few available cab or tricycle on the road. This study would therefore identify the causes of the abolition of commercial motorcycles and assess the effects of the abolition on public transportation and its implications on criminality in Calabar metropolis, Nigeria and this is where the present study differs slightly from previous studies as we have seen from various reviewed literature in this work.

2. Research Setting and Methodology

Calabar Metropolis constitutes the study area. It is a contiguously urbanized region with two Local Government Areas- Calabar Municipality and Calabar South with a total population of 371, 022 (Male -186,607 and Female – 184,415) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). This will form our sample frame. Calabar Metropolis which is the capital of Cross River State is located in the South-South Geopolitical zone. It was a remarkable slave trading and loading base between 1883 and 1906, and later became the first capital of the southern protectorate of Nigeria (Ukwayi, Agba, Inyang, & Eraye, 2011). The town has witnessed rapid socio-economic transformation. The tourism policy of the State has attracted and pulled many Nigerians to the State from within and outside the Country. Calabar metropolis has ample socio-economic opportunities as the state is linked to other parts of the country by road, airport and seaport. The tourism potentials of the state and the establishment of export free zone and TINAPA business resort has pulled many migrants into the city. This has increased the transportation demands of the city.

Survey design was adopted in this study; it was used because it allows for representative sample which permits inferences. Commuters from the ages' of 15 years old and above were involved in the study. The simple random (balloting) sampling method was used to select the sample size. Using the 2006 delineation of enumeration areas (EAS') as a guiding framework a sample size of 1000 eligible households were selected using simple random (balloting) sampling techniques based on the principle of randomization.

Data was collected from the respondents through administration of validated copies of questionnaire. The questions were designed in four point Likert scale. The questionnaire was designed particularly to elicit data needed to answer research questions posed to guide the study. The questionnaire consists two sections; section one contained items on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. Section two was structured to elicit data necessary for ascertaining relationships among the variables.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The sex distribution of respondents weighs heavily in favour of male with (53.3percent) while females were (46.7percent). It indicates that youths within the ages of 15-25 years constitutes (17.5percent), those within the age range of 26-35 years were (48.6percent) while those respondents within the age bracket of 36-45 years were (25.0percent) and 46 years and above were 8.9percent. The implication of this is that, respondents were still in their youthful age who are easily confronted with transportation challenges, and they considered the abolition of commercial motorbikes as mode of public transportation as unfriendly government socio-economic policy.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

S/NO	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Sex		
	Male	524	53.3
	Female	460	46.7
	Total	984	100
	Age		
	15-25	172	17.5
	26-35	478	48.6
	36-45	246	25.0

46 and above	88	8.9
Total	984	100
Marital Status		
Single	539	54.8
Married	384	39.0
Divorced	38	3.9
Widowed	23	2.3
Total	984	100
Occupation		
Student	311	31.6
Civil Servant	266	27.0
Traders	324	32.9
Others	83	8.4
Total	984	100
Educational Attainment		
No Formal Education	115	11.6
Primary	288	29.3
Secondary	366	37.2
Tertiary	215	21.8
Total	987	100
Religion		
Christianity	782	79.5
Islam	144	14.6
Others	58	5.9
Total	984	100

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Table 1 further reveals that 54.8 percent of the respondents were single, 39 percent were married, 3.9 percent had divorced and 2.3 percent were widows. Occupational background of respondents indicates that 31.6 percent were students, civil servants accounted for 27.0 percent, 32.9 percent were unemployed, while only 8.4 percent had other occupational background like tailoring and motor mechanics. The implication is that greater percentage of the respondents who were engaged in various socio-economic activities perceived that government policy on the abolition of commercial motorbikes was buttressed by various factors. The Table 1 also shows that 11.6 percent of the respondents had no formal education, 29.3 percent had primary school certificates; 37.2 percent and 21.8 percent had secondary and tertiary education respectively. The implication of this is that greater percentage (88.6 percent) of the respondents with various educational backgrounds had different perceptions on the abolition of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation. The distribution of respondents also reveals that 79.5 percent were Christians, 14.6 percent were Muslims while only 5.9 percent had other religious background such as African Traditional Religion and Ekankar.

4. Perceptions on Factors in the Abolition of Commercial Motorbikes

The study reveals that the public had various perceptions on factors which account for the abolition of motorbikes as a mode of public transportation in Calabar Metropolis, Nigeria. It was perceived by 64.1 percent

of male participants in the study that government decided to abolish as mode of public transport because the operators use it to commit crime, while 35.9 percent of their female respondents also perceived that the ban on commercial motorbikes was due to the involvement of the operators in criminal activities. This finding align with view of Michael (2010) that commercial motorbike operators indulge in various criminal activities ranging from robbery to snatching of valuables from passengers and pedestrians. This finding also corroborates the observation of Bassey (2011) that commercial motorbike operators capitalized on the flexibility of motorbikes to indulge in criminal activities such as kidnapping, rape, and snatching of handbags and other valuables from their passengers

Table 2 further shows that 43.0 percent of male respondents revealed that the abolition of commercial motorcycles was connected with the high rate of accidents involving motorbike operators and 56.9 percent of the female respondents share a similar view with their male counterparts.

Table 2. Factors in the Abolition of Commercial Motorcycles

Sex	Use of Motorbikes to Commit Crime	High Rate of Accident	Traffic Congestion and Reckless Riding	Government decision to Sell Cars	Total
Male	216 (64.1%)	139 (43.0%)	78 (42.4%)	91 (65.0%)	524
Female	121 (35.9%)	184 (56.9%)	106 (57.6%)	49 (35.0%)	460
Total	337 (100)	323 (100)	184 (100)	140 (100)	100

Source: Field Survey, 2011

This is consistent with Gbadamosi (2006) view that accident rate involving motorbikes in many cities is still on the increase. This finding further confirms Bassey (2011) observation that in town where commercial motorbike operates, the rate of accident is always high.

The study further established that less than 43.0 percent and about 58.0 percent of the male and female participants revealed that commercial motorbikes were abolished due to the recklessness on the part of the operators and high rate of traffic congestions which were witnessed in Calabar Metropolis. This corroborates Sule (2007) who linked the traffic congestions in Nigeria major cities to the proliferation of commercial motorbikes and the high rate of accidents to the operators' recklessness. Adeleye (2011) posited that in Nigeria, there tend to be the proliferation of commercial motorcycles which is instrumental to traffic congestion in major urban centers of Nigeria

Finally, 65.0 percent of male and 35.0 percent female respondents maintained that government abolished commercial motorbikes to enable her introduce urban cabs and tricycles which were sold by government to the public at exorbitant price. The distributions of the Cabs to the drivers became party affairs. People's Democratic Party (The ruling party in the state) leaders in the state bought over the vehicles from the government and resold to the jobless youths at a price considered to be twice that of the real cost of the vehicles .This finding is in tandem with the observation of Chukwu et.al (2008) that Nigerian Leaders formulate and implement policies that are often beneficial to the privileged class, and to the detriment of the generality of the masses. Consequently, the masses have no confidence in many of the policies and programmes of the government since they are not articulated for their benefits.

5. Implication of the Abolition on Transportation

With reference to the public perception on the impact of the abolition of commercial motorbikes as means public transportation in Calabar metropolis, a greater 34.9 percentage of the respondents observed a sharp and sudden increase in transport fare without a corresponding increase in the income of commuters. This confirm Bassey (2010) perception that the ban on motorbikes as a mode of public transport had resulted in an increased in urban transport fare. This is because of the short supply in urban cabs and tricycles, continuous increase in petrol price and increase in urban population. Peter (2010) observed that available cabs prefer plying short distances, while those willing to ply long distances and areas with bad roads charge the commuters excessively. Less than 29.0 percent of the respondents found that urban commuters experienced delays and difficulties accessing vehicles to their various destinations. This is attributed to the short supply of vehicles on the roads, resulting from inadequate provisions of vehicles by government.

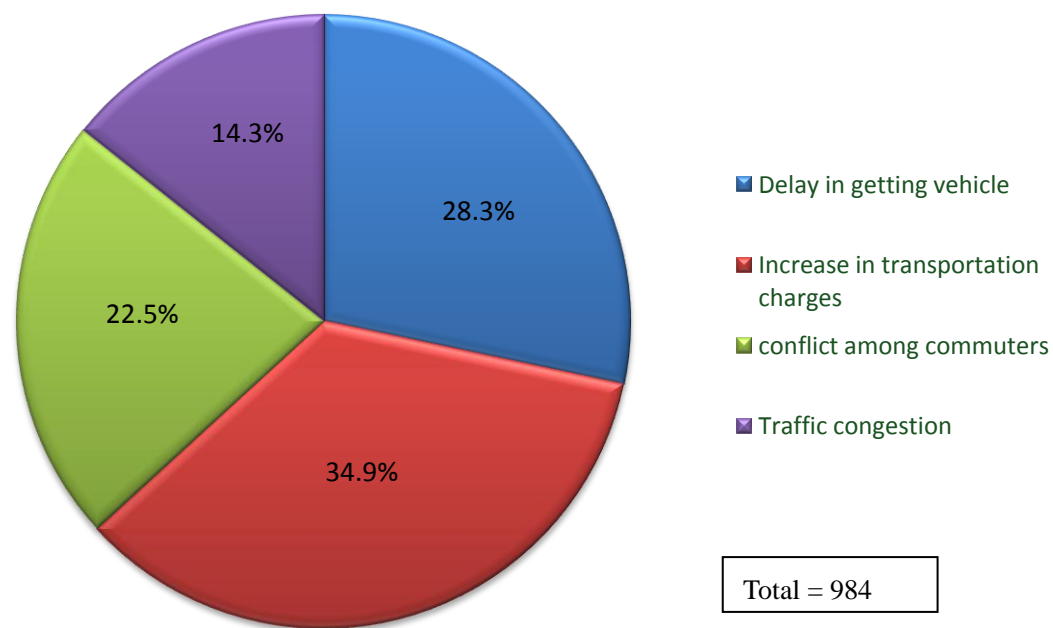


Figure 1. Pie chart showing the impact of the abolition on transportation

This finding is in consonance with the observation of Akpan (2012) that commuters spend several hours daily waiting for commercial cabs to convey them to their various destinations since the ban on motorbikes took effect. The delays in accessing vehicles to various parts of the metropolis had resulted in substantial loss of man-hour in the work place. When commuters spend several hours on the road waiting for vehicles, economic activities are significantly affected. It was revealed that (22.5 percent) of the respondents perceived the abolition of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation by the government periodically brings about conflict among commuters, cab and tricycle operators. According to Peter (2010) since the ban on commercial motorbikes, urban commuters scramble to access available vehicles that can convey them to their various destinations. Because of the short supply of vehicles at various bus stop stations, conflict always ensued as commuters struggle to get into available vehicles. Mosi (2010) observed that since the ban on the use of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation patches of confrontations are daily witnessed among urban commuters and tricycle drivers at various bus stop stations in Nigeria major cities, due to short supply of vehicles.

6. Implication of the Abolition of Commercial Motorbikes on Criminality

On the implication of the abolition of commercial motorbikes on criminality, the result shows that the abolition of motorbikes has resulted in the increase in crime rate in Calabar metropolis. This is indicated with (163) respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing with item 1 in table 3.

Table 3. Implication of the Abolition of Motorbikes on Crime Rate

S/No.	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1.	Abolition of commercial motorbikes has increased the rate of crime.	82 (71.2)	81 (58.1)	30 (39.5)	22 (46.1)	215
2.	The ban on motorbikes has increased armed robbery.	76 (71.6)	91 (58.6)	27 (39.9)	23 (46.5)	217
3.	The ban on motorbikes has increased pick-pocketing and snatching of valuables	72 (58.3)	60 (47.5)	19 (32.3)	25 (37.7)	176

4.	Kidnapping and rape has increased with the ban on commercial motorbikes	29 (84.1)	11 (68.6)	83 (46.7)	131 (54.4)	254
5.	Theft has increased since the abolition of commercial motorbikes	67 (40.4)	23 (32.9)	22 (22.4)	10 (26.1)	122
Total		211	181	266	326	984

*significant at 0.05, X_o obs. 289.4, X_o crit.26.29, df. 16, p 0.05

In the same table 3, the results revealed that (167) participants perceived that the ban on commercial motorbikes has increased armed robbery. On the issue of increase in pick-pocketing and snatching of valuables, the result shows that (132) respondents indicated their support for this statement by agreeing and strongly agreeing with item 3 in the table as against (44) respondents who disagree and strongly disagree. The result further revealed that while the government ban policy had brought about increase in property crime rate, the respondents perceived that the abolition did not invariably result in the upsurge in crime against person such as kidnapping and rape. This is reflected in their response to item 4. The table also shows that (90) respondent were positive that theft had increased since commercial motorbikes were abolished as against (32) who disagree and strongly disagree with the view.

Generally, the result in table 3 shows that the X_o obs 289.4 is greater than the critical value 26.29 at 0.05 significant levels with 16 degree of freedom. Therefore, we may say that the abolition of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation has resulted to a significant increase in crime rate in Calabar metropolis. This finding is in line with the perception of Ukwayi, Agba, Inyang & Micheal (2011) that saw an upsurge in criminal activities in Calabar Metropolis. According to Chioma (2010) the ban on commercial motorbikes had resulted to a sharp increase in property offences. More robbery cases, pick-pocketing, snatching of valuables is witnessed daily in Calabar metropolis. According to Newton (2004) crime incidence such as assault, robbery, theft are high in bus stations as passengers wait for vehicles going their destinations. This implies that the abolition of commercial motorbikes on the account of the involvement of their operators in crime had not addressed the urban crime problem.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the perception of the public on the abolition of commercial motorcycles as means of public transportation and its implication on transportation and criminality. It has been established in this study that the upsurge in criminal activities, road accidents, traffic congestion and government decision to introduce urban cabs were associated with the abolition of commercial motorbikes as means of public transportation by the state government. The abolition had compounded the urban transportation problems as the general public experience delays in getting vehicles to their destinations, increased in transport charges, traffic congestion and conflict among commuters and tricycle operators. The impact of the abolition on criminality is enormous, as the crime situation in Calabar metropolis has not witnessed a downward trend. Armed robbery, theft, snatching of valuables and pick-pocketing has increased. We posit in this study that the abolition of commercial motorcycles as a means of public transportation in Calabar metropolis has not really addressed the urban transportation and crime problems, instead it has intensified it. We therefore recommend that the government should give adequate attention to employment creation for the youths who have been rendered jobless by the abolition. Government should make conscious and conscientious efforts to partner with the private sector to establish transport industries that will create jobs for the youths and make urban cabs available for commuters. Government should ensure that urban taxi drivers are properly monitored to ensure that only recommended transport fare charges are collected from commuters. The law enforcement agencies should be properly equipped to contend with the problem of criminality in the metropolis.

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