

## **Public Perceptions of Patterns and Gender Dimensions of Criminal activities by Commercial Motorcyclists in Nnewi South L.G.A., Anambra State**

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### **Abstract**

Commercial motorcycle operation (CMO) is a very huge business line in Nigeria and has become a source of livelihood to many Nigerians especially the youths. But the same system that came as succour to unemployed Nigerians became the source of worry in many cities in Nigeria, as the operators now use it as a means to perpetrate various crimes. This study examined the Public Perceptions of Patterns and Gender dimensions of Criminal activities by Commercial Motorcyclists in Nnewi South L.G.A., Anambra State, Nigeria. The theoretical thrust of the study is Routine activities theory. A mixed-method research design involving quantitative and qualitative approaches was utilised. The questionnaire schedule and in-depth interview guide were employed for data collection. A multistage sampling procedure was used in selecting a sample size of 350 respondents and a total of 8 participants for IDI schedules. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while inferential statistics (Chi-Square) was employed to test stated hypotheses, while thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. Findings revealed that the patterns of criminal activities associated with CMO in Nnewi are swift snatching of valuables from victims, use of weapons to incite fear and incapacitate their victims and younger females are more susceptible to the above crimes, taking passengers to lonely spots to rob them with dangerous weapons, using motorcycles to spy on victims to provide information about the whereabouts of the victim to the major criminal group. The study, therefore, concluded that to avert this trend, it is important that individuals, communities, government, and all stakeholders in the society pull hands together to nip the phenomenon in the bud.

**Keywords:** Activities, Criminal, Commercial Motorcycle, Gender Focus, Patterns, Public Perception, Victims.

### **Introduction**

Commercial motorcycle has become a very huge business line in Nigeria; it has become a source of livelihood to many Nigerians especially the youths. But it has taken another turn when the same system that came as succour to unemployed Nigerians has become the source of worry in many cities in Nigeria, as the operators now use it as a means to abate

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various crimes. Commercial motorcycle (*Okada*) is the use of motorcycles or bikes for commercial transport in Nigeria (Abdussalam & Adio-Saliu, 2014). The use of motorcycles (*Okada*) for commercial purposes has become a very important means of transportation and economic development in many underdeveloped societies of the world; it goes a long way in poverty reduction in modern cities especially in developing nations (Arosanyin, 2010).

According to Oladipo (2012), commercial motorcycles that are popularly known as *Okada* in Nigeria first began in Calabar, the capital of Cross River State in the early 1970s. It was also said to be used in Yola town in 1970, by the 1980s its use for public transportation had gradually spread to other parts of Nigeria. The use of motorcycles as a means of public transportation in Nigeria has been widely accepted for so many factors, some of which are unemployment, bad roads, shortfalls of other means of land transportations, its affordability, ability to manoeuvre traffic jams its advantage of taking people to the final point of their destination and so forth (Ukwayi et al., 2013; Asekhome et al., 2014). Notwithstanding, they also have negative effects in the cities where they operate for instance, 'going' as they are called in Abuja, *Onaga* in *Wawa* part of old Eastern State as it was popularly called then, which comprised Enugu and Ebonyi. *Okada* riders as they are popularly called in southeast Nigeria today have been linked to serious crime incidents in Nigeria (Mbalisi et al., 2014).

The rate of crime in Nigeria in general and Anambra State, in particular, appears to be high and has raised a general feeling of insecurity of lives and property, and has made residents cry out to both the federal and state governments for urgent assistance to curb the ugly situation to safeguard lives and property of the populace (Idike et al., 2017). Crime is divided into personal crime, property crime, violent crime, cyber-crime, organized crime, white-collar crime, among others. It is personal and violent when it involves violence against persons; like armed robbery, kidnapping, gang beating, rape, and many others. But when the crime is directed at valuable items of individuals, it is said to be property crime e.g., snatching of bags and phones, pickpocketing, etc. Commercial Motorcyclists (CMs) have been associated with criminal activities in Nigeria (Ukwayi et al., 2013). Criminals using motorcycles often target vulnerable unsuspecting victims like older persons,

children, and females. In some cases, females may be victims as well as perpetrators of criminal activities using motorcycles.

In some cities of the globe where commercial motorcyclists (CMs) operate they have been associated with different types of crimes, ranging from armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, snatching of valuables, and pickpocketing. For instance, Buenos (2014) gave an account of how commercial motorcyclists indulge in crimes in Argentina where they (motorcyclists) move in pairs while one jumps off to snatch the valuables of the unsuspecting pedestrians, and the other operates the bike for a fast escape. Again, Galey (2009) noted that motorbike operators were banned in Lebanese as a result of their involvement in crime in the cities. According to Ergui (2006) the rate of cases of robbery by commercial motorcyclists is high and rates of reporting cases are low and it brings greater pressure to the investigative organs. It becomes a long-term projecting crime problem in China the level of criminal offenses taking place in the State (Ergui, 2006). Recently in Africa commercial motorcyclists are viewed as lawless and dangerous. It appears that robbery and other violent crimes and theft are common, with motorcyclists as the perpetrators in Ghana (Rollason, 2012). Crime associated with commercial motorcyclists has been on increase in Nigeria (Okoro 2004; Ailuboye, 2008; Aborisade, 2010). Oladipo, (2012) in his view added that more than seventy percent of crimes committed in cities in Nigeria are being linked with armed bandits operating with motorcycles. In all these vices associated with the motorcyclist in Nigeria, we are concerned about how they manage to carry out these wicked acts and still escape in most cases and the gender dimensions to it. According to Solaja et al. (2015) commercial motorcyclists are sometimes perceived as perpetrators of dubious dealings, double-crossing of innocent passengers, snatching of personal belongings like bags, money, phones, and other valuable items.

It is on the ground of these culminating dangers associated with the operation of commercial Motorcyclists that this study sought to explore the public perceptions of patterns and gender dimensions of criminal activities by commercial motorcyclists in Nnewi South L.G.A., Anambra State

### **Research Questions**

The following two research questions were formulated to guide this study

1. What are the patterns of criminal activities by commercial motorcyclists in Nnewi South?

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2. What are the gender variations of victims of criminal activities by commercial motorcyclists in Nnewi South?

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study sought to explore the public perceptions of patterns and gender dimensions of criminal activities by commercial motorcyclists in Nnewi South L.G.A., Anambra State with the following specific objectives;

1. To identify the patterns of criminal activities by commercial motorcyclists in Nnewi South
2. To ascertain the gender variations of victims of criminal activities by commercial motorcyclists in Nnewi South

### **Study Hypothesis**

One study hypothesis was formulated to help the research cross-tabulate the two major study variables:

**Hypothesis:** Respondents vary significantly in identifying the patterns of criminal activities by motorcycle operators based on their occupational categories.

## **Conceptual Clarifications**

### **Conceptualizing Commercial Motorcycle**

Commercial Motorcycle (CM) is the use of motorbike to convey people to their destination which they have to pay for. According to Ajayi et al. (2017) commercial motorcycle is a popular mode of mass transportation in Nigeria, which despite its acknowledged benefits has been associated with health and social problems, it is embraced largely by young Nigerians. Commercial motorcycle transport business as a means of public transportation has been widely embraced by many in Nigeria due to its flexibility in taking people to the last point of their destination, the quick generation of money to attend to family needs as well as being cheap and easy maintenance (Mbalisi & Nzokuru, 2014). According to Oladipo (2012) the collapse of the public intra – city transport system paved way for the rise of motorcycles as means of public transportation in Nigeria popularly called *Okada*.

In Nigeria, commercial motorcycles used as a mode of public transportation are popularly known as *Okada* and operated mainly by young youths and a few middle-aged men

(Mbalisi & Nzokuru, 2014). This business began in Nigeria in the 1980s as a result of economic crunch, youth lost their jobs, and need to make ends meet, the collapse of the public transport sector, unmemorable roads, this is why the business enjoys acceptance by the public and it boomed till date (Mbalisi & Nzokuru, 2014). It has also been linked with criminal activities of different types (Ukwayi et al., 2013).

### **2.1.2 Conceptualising Criminal Activities**

This concept of criminality is derived from the concept of crime. So, criminal activity is an act of committing a crime. According to Idike et al. (2017), crime is often thought of as a moral threat and injurious to society. They further said that crime denotes an unlawful act unishable by a state. According to Ejemoyovwi (2015) crime is as old as man himself and effort has been directed towards the ways of combating and reducing it. In the view of Fajnzylber et al. (2002) criminal acts result from a rational decision based on a cost-benefit analysis. That is to say, the criminal weighs between expected benefit and the opportunity cost which is the punishment or penalties imposed to apprehended criminals.

Scholars identified some key determinants of crime, these factors are; poverty, unemployment, failure of leadership or bad governance, and weaknesses in law enforcement or crime-control bodies (Ghani, 2017). Criminal activities are in the form of robbery, assaults, theft, internet fraud, impersonation, Advance fee fraud, homicides, kidnapping, raping, etc. Recently most of these criminal activities are been linked with commercial motorcycle operators, (CMOs) (Ejemoyovwi, 2015). Another study found that the motorcycle riders' involvement in property crimes in Anambra state is rampant, and to checkmate the situation, the government has restricted the operational hours of the riders in the state, proscribed their operations in some areas (okorie et al., 2017).

### **The patterns of criminal activities among commercial motorcyclists**

There is an increase in the number of motorcycles due to their use for commercial purposes aids a lot of criminal activities such as snatching of personal effects (like bags, money, phones) abduction, killing, and raping. People of questionable character are among the motorbike operators (Mbalisi, & Nzokure, 2014). Ukwayi et al. (2013) observed that personal crime reportedly committed by commercial motorcyclists shows there fall under offenses against the person it would appear that some of the features that have enabled

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CMs to be useful for transportation are the same features that have enabled them to be used for vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping, stealing, and others (Asekhome & Oisamoje, 2013). Ukwai et al. (2013) found that it is common in some parts of Nigeria to see people around with guns, rifles, pistols, and other dangerous weapons robbing on motorbikes. It further stated that these unknown men brutalize, harass, and intimidate innocent citizens at night and in broad daylight, sometimes not minding the presence of armed policemen. Qualitative data from this study further maintained that,

Okada riders are the most difficult people to control. Apart from not respecting traffic laws which they are known for, some of them are robbers, what they do in the day is to monitor people around and at night they come to rob them. Okada riders are involved in many of the robbery cases in this town (Ukwai et al., 2013, p. 105).

To buttress more, another interviewee a policeman from Itam police station said that;

Okada riders you see on the streets of Uyo are criminals, many of them use Okada operation as a cover-up to rob people. Recently at Nwaniba road where my friend's wife was dropped by Okada man she opened her handbag to give him money, he snatched her handbag containing all the money she sold goods for the day and left' (Ukwai et al., 2013, p.78).

Oladipo, (2012) in his work revealed that, when an unsuspecting passenger stops a rider, a criminal-minded rider takes the passenger to spots where he/she will be robbed or raped if the passenger is female. He stated that such criminal activities are usually perpetrated in the early hours of the morning or late at night. Furthermore, Okorie et al. (2017) revealed that commercial motorcycle riders in the state only use it as a smokescreen to aid and commit a crime. They act as informants to criminals; use a motorcycle as surveillance to monitor the environments, only to know where they will carry out their nefarious activities.

According to Ukwai et al. (2013) there are gender differences in victims of commercial motorcyclists' crime. They noted that female residents of Onitsha are more likely to be victims than their male counterparts. Which they attributed to be; weaker sex, carrying more valuables while on transit, and being vulnerable to the incidences of rape.

## **Patterns of criminal activities by commercial motorcyclists in Nigeria**

The finding of Ukwai et al. (2013) further indicated that females are more victims of commercial motorcyclists' crime than their male counterparts with 80.7% supporting this view and the reason is that, females are weaker. Another difference is found among young and older people with 68.1% supporting the view that younger persons fall more victims than older people with 31.9% indicating that young people keep late at night, go out often and board Okada often. Onwuchekwe et al. (2017) revealed that CMOs are been implicated in crimes such as snatching of bags, stealing of vehicle parts, electronic gadgets, money, and other valuables, and in most cases inflict physical injuries on unsuspecting pedestrians on the process of carrying out these criminal acts. Their result further revealed that CMs without proper identification are the ones involved in criminal activities in Anambra with 69.4% supporting this view. Furthermore, the same findings buttressed those commercial motorcyclists carry out their criminal activities at any time of the day with 43% supporting this view, 35% of the respondents believe that the criminals carry out their evil acts mostly during the daytime, 16% of the respondents said it is only when the passengers create opportunity for the occurrence of the crime, while 6% of the respondents were not certain when the commission of these crimes take place.

### **Theoretical Orientation: Routine Activity Theory (RAT)**

The routine activity theory (RAT) of Cohen and Felson (1979) constitutes the theoretical framework for this study. This theory was chosen because its best explained the issue under study. RAT states that for a criminal action to occur there must be a convergence in time and space of three factors; these are the presence of a motivated offender, the absence of a capable guardian, and the presence of a suitable target (person or object). Whether or not these elements converge or coincide is a product of the routine activities (day-to-day movement) of potential targets and offenders. Commercial motorcyclists may be regarded by the assumptions of the routine activities as the offenders, suitable target, (passengers, and materials. Daily activities of people such as going to work, pursuing recreation, and running errands can bring offenders in contact with suitable victims and targets. The likely offender may be the commercial motorcycle operator, the suitable target may be persons,

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an object, or a place while the guardian may be police patrols, security guards, vigilant staff, friends, neighbours, or close circuit television (CCTV) system being monitored.

The involvement of commercial motorcyclists from Cohen and Felson theoretical enterprise revealed that the prevalence of crime by commercial motorcyclists is due to the availability of targets which may be the passengers and materials that are attractive to the potential offender (commercial motorcyclist) and the absence of guardians such as the police or other law enforcement agents to prevent the crime from occurring.

### **Methodology**

This paper adopted a mixed-methods design approach. Nnewi South is one of the twenty-one (21) Local Government Areas (LGA) in Anambra State South-east Nigeria with its headquarters in Ukpok. The choice of Nnewi South is based on the growing number of crimes in the beautiful city of Nnewi South and is often associated with CMOs. Nnewi is the second-largest city in Anambra State. Occupationally, they are predominantly traders and Farmers. Nnewi South is also made up of people from other different cultural and educational backgrounds who are earning their living through trading. Nnewi has one of the biggest industrial cities in Nigeria. Its main market is called the *Nkwo Nnewi* market (the largest spare parts market in West Africa), in this market, the highest motorcycle dealers are found and in other markets. The development of the *Nkwo Nnewi* market propelled the fast growth of the local economy, and many schools. The local government area is bounded to the north by Nnewi North Local Government Area, to the east by Idemili South, Anaocha, and Aguata Local Government Areas, to the south by Imo State, and west by Ihiala and Ekwusigo Local Government Areas.

The total population of the study is 314,362 which is the total population of the LGA. Meanwhile, the target population of this study is the residents who are 15 years and above in the LGA whose population is 204,335 as also projected to 2019 population of the Local Government. The significance of this age limit (15 years) was because it was discovered that most of Okada riders in Nnewi South are barely 15 years of age, and most of the victims are equally at same age range, so, their views are worth being considered in this study.



A multi-stage sampling procedure, which involves probability and non-probability methods were adopted in the selection of respondents. To do this, Nnewi South was clustered into ten towns. Thereafter, three towns out of ten in the local government area were selected using simple random sampling technique (SRS), the names of the ten towns were written on pieces of paper, folded, put in a basket, shuffled it and a child was called on to pick three out of the basket. The communities are Ukpor, Ekwulumili, Amichi, Azigbo, Unubi, Ezinifite, Osumenyi, Akwaihedi, Ebenato-Ozuluogu, and Utuh while the selected ones are Ukpor, Amichi, and Ezinifite. In the second stage, one electoral ward was selected from each of the towns selected earlier thereby making it a total of three wards using the Simple Random Sampling technique (balloting). In stage three, two streets were selected using SRS (balloting) from each of the selected INEC ward areas. This gave a total of six (6) streets.

In each of the selected streets, the houses were arranged according to their street numbers, and houses were selected using the systematic sampling technique with a random start of 3. This was determined using digits of ten (10) naira notes. In each house, eligible respondents were selected purposively based on the criteria of age (15 years and above) and availability. In the selection of respondents, care was taken to ensure gender balance. At the end of the sampling, 58 respondents who are 15 years and above were selected from each street to respond to the questionnaires. This gave a total of 348 respondents while the remaining two (2) questionnaire was balloted for among the six streets from which two streets out of the six streets were allotted an extra one questionnaire. This made it a total of 350 respondents for questionnaire distribution. Structured questionnaires and In-Depth Interviews (IDI) were used as instruments of data collection. Out of the 350, copies of the questionnaire were administered to the sampled respondents, out of which only three hundred and thirty-one (331) copies (representing 94.6% of the copies of the questionnaire) were collected back by the researcher. However, after thorough data sorting or cleaning of the returned copies, three hundred and twenty-seven (327) copies (representing 98.8% of the returned questionnaire copies) were considered valid; while four (4) copies (representing 1.2% of the returned questionnaire copies) were considered invalid due to improper or incomplete filling of the items in those questionnaire copies.

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Hence, only 327 valid copies were used for data analysis. The quantitative data were analysed using percentages, frequency count, graphics, and chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) inferential statistics were used in the test of the stated hypothesis. SPSS software was used in processing the data.

On the other hand, in-depth Interviews (IDI) and key informant interviews (KII) were conducted in selected places that were outside the streets used in the questionnaire distribution. The participants were police staff, leaders of the commercial motorcyclists (Okada) union, Staff of the civil defense corps, and members of the vigilante group. The participants for IDIs and KIIs were 2 from each group and that gave a total of 8 participants for the qualitative data collection. The qualitative data obtained through IDI with selected stakeholders in the study area were analyzed thematically in line with the study objectives and used to support the quantitative data. In addition, the thematic method was used in the analysis of the qualitative data of the KII and interpreted using content analysis.

## **Results**

### **Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

The socio-demographic data of the respondents, such as sex, age, educational attainment, occupation, annual income, marital status, and religious affiliation were presented in table 1:

**Table 1: Summary of Composite Analysis of Demographic Characteristics of the Respondent**

Socio-Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	139	42.4
Female	188	57.6
Total	327	100.0
<b>Age Categories</b>		
18 – 27 Years	30	9.1
28 – 37 Years	121	37.1
38 – 47 Years	102	31.2
48 – 57 Years	56	17.2
58 – 67 Years	18	5.4
Total	327	100
<b>Occupation</b>		
Trading	123	37.6
Civil Service	50	15.3
Artisan	82	25.1
Studying	27	8.3
Unemployed	35	10.7
Others	10	3.1
Total	327	100.0
<b>Level of Educational Attainment</b>		
No formal education	3	0.9
Primary School	34	10.4
Secondary School	126	38.5
Tertiary (Diploma)	73	22.3
Tertiary (Graduate)	84	25.7
Tertiary (Post-Graduate)	7	2.1
Total	327	100.0
<b>Average Monthly Income</b>		
< 30,000.00	132	40.4
31,000.00 - 60,000.00	108	33.0
61,000.00 - 90,000.00	62	19.0
91,000.00 - 120,000.00	17	5.2
Above 120,000.00	8	2.4
Total	327	100.0

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<b>Religious Affiliation</b>		
Christianity	273	83.5
Islam	20	6.1
African Traditional Religion	34	10.4
Total	327	100.0

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***Field Survey, 2021***

Data analysis as contained in table 1 shows that a majority (57.6%) of female respondents participated in the study compared to a relatively lower proportion (42.4%) of them who were males. The data also show that the respondents aged between a minimum of 18 years and a maximum of 67 years, with those aged between the age categories of 28-37 years constituting the majority (33.7%) in the population. The mean age of the respondents was 39.8 years. This shows that a good number of youthful adults were included in the study.

Concerning occupation, data analysis showed that the highest proportion (37.6%) of the respondents were traders. This is followed by 25.1% of them who were artisans. However, the least occupational group among the respondents is 8.3% of them who were students. Meanwhile, 3.1% of the respondents indicated other occupational groups such as farming, apprentice, among others. Data analysis equally shows that with regards to respondents' educational qualifications, the highest proportion (38.5%) of them only finished up to the secondary school level. This was followed by 25.7% of them who attained up to graduate level. These data suggest that a relatively higher proportion of residents in Nnewi South L.G.A were literate and this has implications on their ability to understand and respond effectively to the questions posed to them in this study.

The highest proportion (40.4%) of the respondents indicated that their average monthly income range is below 30,000. This is followed by 33.0% of them who indicated that their average monthly income ranged between 31,000 – 60,000 naira, while the least proportion (2.4%) of the respondents indicated that their average monthly income was above 120,000 naira. This shows that a majority of the respondents fell within the lower-income class. Finally, on the analysis of socio-demographics, a majority (83.5%) of the respondents were Christians, 10.4% of them were traditionalists; while 6.1% of them were affiliated with Islam. This finding is not surprising since the study area is a Christian-dominated zone in Nigeria.

## Analysis of Public Perception of the patterns of criminal activities by commercial motorcyclists in Nnewi South

**Table 2:** Respondents' Views on the Major Strategies Employed by Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Perpetrating Criminal Activities within Communities

Response Options	Frequency	Percent
– Swift snatching of victim's valuable	172	52.5
– Use of weapons (gun, dagger) to incite fears and incapacitate victims	80	24.4
– Brutalization, harassment, and intimidation of victims	52	15.8
– Killing of victims	24	7.3
– Other	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### *Field Survey, 2021*

As contained in table 2, about half the proportion (52.5%) of the respondents had the view that motorcycle operators mostly perpetrate criminal activities through swift snatching of victims' valuables. The least strategies employed as indicated by the lowest proportion (7.3%) of the respondents are that of the killing of victims. In other words, the criminals rarely kill their victims but are more interested in stealing valuable properties. This coincides with the views of an interviewee on the Major Strategies Employed by Commercial Motorcycle Operators in Perpetrating Criminal Activities within Communities, he noted that,

... the patterns of criminal activities involving motorcycle operators are dynamic. This is one of the major reasons why their activities were banned in major cities of this State (Anambra State). But on most occasions, the reports we often get are that of snatching valuable properties from unsuspecting victims. Equally, sometimes, we get reports from victims that they were robbed at gunpoint by those criminals (Male, 45 Years, Senior Police Personnel, Nnewi South L.G.A).

Another interviewee brought another dimension into the issue when he noted that,

...sometimes, some of those criminals use juju (charms) to hypnotise their victims. Once they succeed in hypnotising them, they will take them to hidden places where they will then perform criminal acts on the victims. As local security personnel, I get a lot of information about these criminals and I can certainly tell you that this is a reality on the ground regarding most of these motorcycle operators in Nnewi South L.G.A (Male, 51 Years Old, Community Vigilante Officer, Nnewi South L.G.A).

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From the responses above it can be deduced that criminals among commercial motorcyclists do not only use the weapon to subdue their victims but they also use diabolic means to hypnotise before dealing with them. The respondents were further asked to indicate among the options provided for them, to reflect their observed patterns through which criminal motorcycle operators use in perpetrating criminal activities. The result of data analysis conducted on their responses in this regard is presented in table 3;

**Table 3:** *Respondents' Indications on the Patterns through which Criminal Motorcycle Operators Use in Perpetrating Criminal Activities*

<b>Response Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
– By taking their passengers to a spot where their gang are to be robbed or raped by the gang	83	25.3
– By taking their passengers to a lonely spot and robbing/raping them with a weapon	125	38.2
– Act like informant to criminal gang groups who will attack their victims	70	21.3
– By conniving with a criminal group to rob their victim either at home or while on transit	39	11.8
– Other	11	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100.0</b>

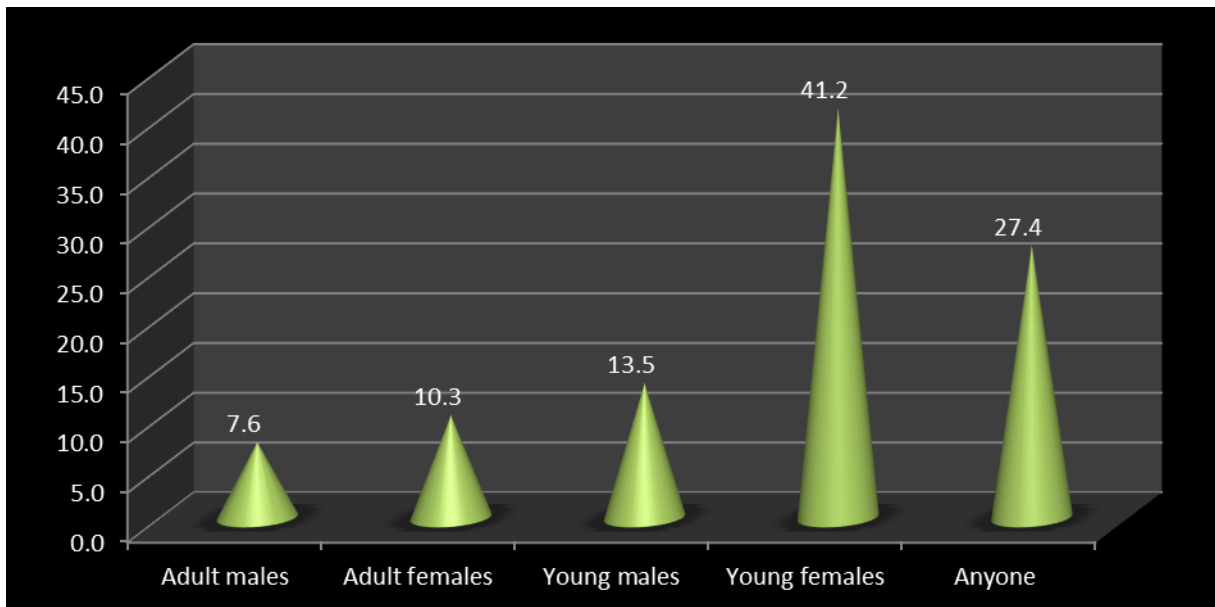
### *Field Survey, 2021*

Data analyzed in table 3 shows that for a relative majority (38.2%) of the respondents, criminal motorcycle operators mostly operate by taking their passengers to lonely spots and robbing them, and on most occasions rape the females using force with weapons. The last option as indicated by 11.8% of the respondents is that of connivance with criminal groups to rob their victims. Approaching this issue from the qualitative aspect, an interviewee had this to say,

If you ask me, I will say that there are various patterns through which crimes with the use of Okada (motorcycles) may occur. You know that a majority of these okada riders are from other ethnic groups apart from Igbo ...the most being the Hausas, and if you have been following the events in the media, you will find out that most of these Fulani Okada riders hide AK 47 gun in their motorcycles. That is how they operate nowadays. They can carry a passenger and before you know it, they will take the passenger to lonely places and use a weapon such as guns to rob them of their properties (Female, 45 Years, Community Women Leader, Nnewi South L.G.A).

### **Analysis of Public Perception of the gender dimensions of criminal activities by commercial motorcyclists in Nnewi South**

In the bid to determine the pattern of victimization in crimes committed by motorcycle operators in Nnewi South L.G.A, the respondents were asked to indicate the category of persons most susceptible to victimization concerning criminal activities by the motorcycle operators. Results of analysis conducted on their responses are presented in figure 1.



**Fig. 1: Respondents' Views on the Category of Individuals Most Susceptible to Victimization concerning Crimes Committed by Motorcycle Operators**

Data analysed in figure 1 show that the majority (41.2%) of the respondents had the view that young female individuals are most susceptible to victimization concerning criminal activities by commercial motorcycle operators in Nnewi South L.G.A. This is followed by 27.4% of the respondents who believed that the pattern of victimisation to criminal activities in the hands of motorcycle operations cut across anybody. In other words, the criminal commercial motorcycle operators attack all categories of people. These findings are supported by the views of an interviewee on the Category of Individuals Most Susceptible to Victimization concerning Crimes Committed by Motorcycle Operators, who argued that,

...in most cases, young females are the most victims, probably due to the perception of the vulnerability of females in our society. But in reality, most reports we get about being victims in the hands of criminal motorcycle operators often come from young females

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compared to every other age group (Male, 38 Years Old, Nigeria Civil Defence Corps Official, Nnewi South L.G.A)

However, another interviewee believes that,

Hmm! ...in this present crime situation in Nigeria, anybody can fall victim to crimes. These criminals don't care about who is who. As far as they are targeting something, even if it is an elderly person, they will still perpetrate their criminal acts. Crime is becoming a serious business in the country and these criminal elements are leveraging on the challenges of the security agencies to commit criminal acts on anyone that they perceive as a vulnerable prey (Male, 45 Years, Senior Police Personnel, Nnewi South L.G.A).

From the responses from the table above and that first interviewee, it is apparent that younger females are more victims than their male counterparts and compared to older females.

**Table 4:** *Respondents' Views about the Patterns through which Criminal Commercial Motorcycle Operators Pick Victims*

<b>Response Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
– Through conversation with their passengers to elicit information about them or another possible victim	66	20.1
– By using their motorbike to move around during day time to monitor their suitable target only to come back and attack in the night	82	25.0
– They attack any passenger they carry at any slightest opportunity	112	34.4
– They have informants among non-CMs members of society	50	15.3
– Others	17	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### ***Field Survey, 2021***

Data analysis shows that a greater proportion (34.4%) of the respondents had the view that criminal motorcycle operators attack any passenger they carry at any slightest opportunity. This is followed by 25.0% of them who indicated that they use their motorcycles to move around to monitor their suitable targets and come back later to attack their victims.

**Table 5:** *Respondents' Views on the Time of the Day to which Criminal Commercial Motorcycle Operators Attack Their Victims*

<b>Response Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
– Very early in the morning (5-7 am)	60	18.3



– During middle of the day (12-2pm)	25	7.5
– During evening time (6-9pm)	115	35.1
– Late in the night (10 pm and above)	35	10.6
– Any time of the day	93	28.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Field Survey, 2021**

As seen in Table 5, a majority (35.1%) of the respondents believed that the criminal commercial motorcycle operators usually attack their victims during the evening time particularly between the periods of 6 – 9 am. Another significant proportion (28.5%) equally believed that criminals can attack at any time of the day. Reacting concerning the Time of the Day to which Criminal Commercial Motorcycle Operators Attack Their Victims, an interviewee noted that,

There is no specific time the criminals perpetrate their criminal activities. However, evening periods may be riskier because their faces may not be seen at that time. That notwithstanding, many of the reports we get indicate that the crimes are equally likely to occur during the daytime. What is important is for people to avoid going through lonely areas whether during the day or night because such are the areas where the criminals have more opportunity to carry out their agendas (Male, 42 Years, Community Vigilante Officer, Nnewi South L.G.A).

**Hypothesis Result**

Respondents vary significantly in identifying the patterns of criminal activities by motorcycle operators based on their occupational categories.

**Table 6:** Summary of Chi-Square test Showing Respondents' Occupational Groups concerning Variations in their Views Regarding the Patterns of Criminality Among CMOs

Pattern of Criminality	Respondents' Occupations						Total	$\chi^2$	Df	Sig.
	Trading	Civil Service	Artisan	Studying	Unemployed	Others				
By taking their passengers to a spot where their gang are to be robbed or raped by the gang	26	13	23	6	11	3	82			
	30.8	12.5	20.6	6.8	8.8	2.5	82.0			
	21.1%	26.0%	28.0%	22.2%	31.4%	30.0%	25.1%			
By taking their passengers to a lonely spot and	48	18	37	6	12	4	125			
	47.0	19.1	31.3	10.3	13.4	3.8	125.0			
	39.0%	36.0%	45.1	22.2	34.3	40.0	38.2			

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robbing/raping them with a weapon			%	%	%	%	%			
Act like informant to criminal gang groups who will attack their victims	28 26.3	10 10.7	12 17.6	9 5.8	9 7.5	2 2.1	70 70.0	18.18	20	.575
	22.8%	20.0%	14.6 %	33.3 %	25.7 %	20.0 %	21.4 %	8 <sup>a</sup>		
By conniving with a criminal group to rob their victim either at home or while on transit	19 14.7	5 6.0	8 9.8	4 3.2	2 4.2	1 1.2	39 39.0			
	15.4%	10.0%	9.8%	14.8 %	5.7%	10.0 %	11.9 %			
Others	2 4.1	4 1.7	2 2.8	2 .9	1 1.2	0 .3	11 11.0			
	1.6%	8.0%	2.4%	7.4%	2.9%	0.0%	3.4%			
Total	123 123.0 100.0 %	A50 50.0 100.0 %	82 82.0 100.0 %	27 27.0 100.0 %	35 35.0 100.0 %	10 10.0 100.0 %	327 327.0 100.0 %			

The chi-square test was run to determine if variation existed between respondents in different occupational groups, concerning their view regarding the patterns of criminality among CMOs. No statistically significant variation was found, ( $\chi^2 (20) = 18.188, p = .575$ ). Table 6 shows the analysis and result of the hypothesis. The test result revealed that the computed chi-square was 18.188, with a p-value of .575. This indicated that the p-value was greater than the significance level set at .05 ( $p=.575, >0.05$  sig.). Since the p-value was higher than the significance level, it presents the reason to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate. This implies that the respondents had similar views about the patterns of criminality among CMOs irrespective of their occupational groupings.

**Discussions**

The result of this study indicates that the pattern of criminal activities by commercial motorcycle operators in the area varied in dimensions. However, the major patterns observed include swift snatching of valuables from victims, use of weapons to incite fears and incapacitate their victims, taking passengers to lonely spots to rob them with dangerous weapons. Other latent patterns include: using motorcycles to spy on victims to provide information about the whereabouts of the victim to the major criminal group,

using motorcycles to carry out assassination attacks. This finding was supported by qualitative findings while one of the interviewees brought another dimension to it when he stated that some of the CMOs use juju (charm) to hypnotise their victims to enable them to carry out their heinous acts. These findings are consistent with previous studies which observed similar patterns in criminal activities involving motorcycle operators (Ukwayi et al., 2013).

Further findings revealed that the criminals using motorcycles often attack their passengers, especially young female ones at any slightest opportunity and this mostly occurs during the evening time. Perhaps, this period is most convenient for the criminals considering that it has become dark and the presence of law enforcement officers may not be felt significantly within that period. As such, any person can be a suitable target for them within that time. This is consistent with the assumption of routine activity theory which argues among other things that crime occurs when there is a motivated offender, absence of a capable guardian, and presence of a suitable target (Clarke & Felson, 1993).

### **Conclusion**

The major aim of this study was to investigate the public perceptions of patterns and gender dimensions of criminal activities by commercial motorcyclists in Nnewi South L.G.A., Anambra State, Nigeria. Exploring how the public perceives, common criminal activities among CMOs, patterns of occurrence, and gender-related factors, as part of this research have provided new empirical insights into the phenomenon of criminality with the use of commercial motorcycles in Nigeria, particularly within the context of this present study area. Based on the preceding key findings, several conclusions may be drawn from this study. However, the general conclusion for this is that the primary aim of this study was achieved; by establishing empirically that, criminal activities involving motorcycle operators were a prevalent phenomenon in Nnewi South L.G.A. From the study, it became clear that issues associated with the patterns of criminality among CMOs vary in dimensions, with major patterns including swift snatching of valuable from victims, use of weapons to incite fears and incapacitate their victims, taking passengers to lonely spots to rob them with dangerous weapons, using motorcycles to spy on victims to provide information about the whereabouts of the victim to the major criminal group, and using

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motorcycles to carry out assassination attacks, among other latent patterns. The study equally crimes involving CMOs were likely to occur during the evening period and females were more susceptible to victimization in the criminal activities. The respondents did not vary in their views regarding the patterns of criminality among CMOs based on their occupational groups

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. There is the need for people and communities to become security conscious to understand the dynamics of crimes associated with CMO, to avoid certain behaviours that predispose them to victimisation in the hands of criminals using motorcycles.
2. There should be organisation or re-organisation of neighbourhood vigilante groups to guard the communities and members of the communities ensuring that they report to the security outfits about the hot spots for criminal activities involving motorcycle operators within their communities.
3. There is equally the need to increase the presence of security operatives within most uncovered areas in Newi South L.G.A. This could be done with the establishment of local vigilante services (where it does not exist), to work hand in hand with the formal law enforcement agents in security various communities.

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