

CREATING EMPLOYMENT THROUGH TRANSPORT; THE YOUTH AND MOTORCYCLE (*BODA BODA*) IN KITENGELA, KAJIADO COUNTY- KENYA**Gladys Moraa M. Nyachieo****Kenya****ABSTRACT**

It is widely recognized that young people have been among the most adversely affected by the current economic crisis in Africa and the world. The youths have reduced chances of getting jobs into the formal sector. Due to the above situation, the youths are engaging in a variety of activities for 'survival'. In Kenya, the motorcycle (*boda boda*) transport is a form of employment that is giving job opportunities to many young people at a time when the world is facing global unemployment problems. Transport is an important component in both rural and urban development programs and an enabling element for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals. This is in terms of creating employment for the young people and facilitating movement of goods and services. Utilizing a sample of 50 motorcycle (*boda boda*) riders in Kitengela, the study examined motorcycle (*boda boda*) as a form of employment for the youth. The main objective was to determine the role of (*boda boda*) motorcycles in employment creation for the youth in Kitengela, the study looks at whether (*boda boda*) motorcycles have improved the financial wellbeing of youths in Kitengela. The study demonstrates that youths can create employment through their innovative initiatives. The significance of this study is in filling a gap in literature. In addition, it suggests what the government and other stakeholders can do to ensure that the transport sector that is creating employment for the youth is made more efficient and safe. Convenience sampling was used. Qualitative data was coded and summarized and categorized in themes. SPSS was used to analyze quantitative data. Data was presented in pie charts, bar charts and frequency tables.

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KEYWORDS: Unemployment, Transport, Youth, Motorcycle, *Boda boda*.**INTRODUCTION**

Youth unemployment is a major challenge in the world today. Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the regions highly affected by youth unemployment (ILO, 2003, Jua, 2003). While contending with the current economic crisis in the world, African countries will not cope with the growing number of unemployed youth in the region unless serious measures and alternative strategies are developed. Otherwise the situation will get out of control. In trying to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, the millennium development goals emphasized on achieving employment for among others the young people thereby improving employment rates. The Millennium Development Goals encourage development by improving socio economic conditions. Some of these conditions can be improved through job creation.

In Kenya, youth unemployment is a serious development issue. It is estimated that 64% of unemployed persons in Kenya are youth. Interestingly only 1.5% of the unemployed youth have formal education beyond secondary school level and the remaining over 92% have no vocational or professional skills training. This group

either idle all day long, others get into crime while others try anything else to make ends meet.

According to the Economic survey 2010, the total number of units (vehicles) registered a 32.8 per cent increase to stand at 161,813 in 2009. The increase is mainly attributed to higher registration of motor and auto cycles which rose significantly, accounting for 56.3per cent of the total registered units. Motorcycles and Auto cycles have become popular across the country. In rural areas, they have provided relief to limited transport options while in the urban areas they have supplemented both passenger transport and mail delivery.

In Kenya, majority of the *boda boda* riders do not have another form of employment. After the zero rating of all motorcycles below 250cc, the motorcycle prices went down. Therefore for some, motorcycles became an opportunity to get into the lucrative transport business. Many bought the motorbikes for their children or brothers to do business with. Others bought these motorbikes and hired the idle youth to do business with it and give them a certain amount of money at the end of the day.

The motorcycle transport is a form of employment that has given opportunities to many people, both young and old in Kenya at a time when the world is facing a global unemployment problem. The National Youth Situation Analysis Report (2009) states that, despite the government promise to tackle the unemployment problem, they do not see a concrete strategy to address this issue. Majority of those affected by unemployment are the young 15-29 age bracket.

While thousands of motorcycle operators are estimated to run small taxi services, most do not have valid rider licenses. But by offering cheaper fares and faster transport times, many passengers are willing to take the risk. It is also emerging that majority of those *boda boda* motorcycles on the road belong to the 'rich' and not the riders we see operating them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study area was purposely chosen for its suitability for the study. The research concentrated on Kitengela town centre where many *boda boda* motorcycles are found in operation. The main data collection tool was an interview schedule. With the assistance of *boda boda* association leaders, riders were interviewed using an interview schedule. A total of 50 respondents were interviewed for the study. Convenience sampling was used whereby respondents are selected based on their willingness, accessibility and proximity to the researcher. The researcher interviewed willing and available respondents. This was the best method of sampling in this study due to the following reasons. First, a complete sample frame for *boda boda* riders does not exist. Second, *boda boda* motorcycle riders do not have designated parks or stages. Third, they are people on the move going on their business looking for and ferrying passengers. Fourth, the fact that *boda boda* motorcycle riders are always moving from one area to another took care of randomization. The study was limited to fifty respondents due to time and financial constraints. In addition, completing an interview with the respondents who were constantly ferrying passengers was a challenge. The data collected was compiled and analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio economic and demographic characteristics of *boda boda* riders

The study established the socio-economic conditions of the riders in Kitengela. The information was important in highlighting the situation of *boda boda* operators and find ways of mainstreaming *boda boda* motorcycle business to increase employment for the youths. This will improve their livelihoods. The frequency distribution of the respondent's gender showed that majority 96% were male, this

shows that this is a male dominated sub sector. Only 4% were women. This could be attributed to the fact that the *boda boda* riding and business is dangerous and risky affair therefore most women shy away from it. The age distribution of the respondents showed that, most of them were young. The age bracket 20-24 had the majority with 52% of the respondents followed by age bracket 25-29 which was 22%. The under 20years old were 6% while ages 30 and above were 20%. This indicates that indeed this is a sub sector that has been taken over by the young people. In addition, majority of the respondents were married 64%, this emphasises the need for them to have a sustainable source of income to take care of their families financial needs. Majority 70% respondents had attained at least secondary education. The other 20% had college education, while 10% had primary education. This indicates that most *boda boda* are literate but do not have any vocational or specialized training.

Table 1: Highest level of education attained by respondent

Highest level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Primary	5	10
Secondary	35	70
College/university	10	20
Total	50	100

The Motorcycle Ownership and Contractual Agreement

The nature of ownership of *boda boda* motorcycles is presented in Figure1 below.

Majority (54%) of the *boda boda* motorcycles in the study were owned by the rider's employer. Relatives and friends owned 28% and 2% of the *boda boda* motorcycles respectively. Only 16% of the *boda boda* motorcycles were owned by the riders interviewed in the study.

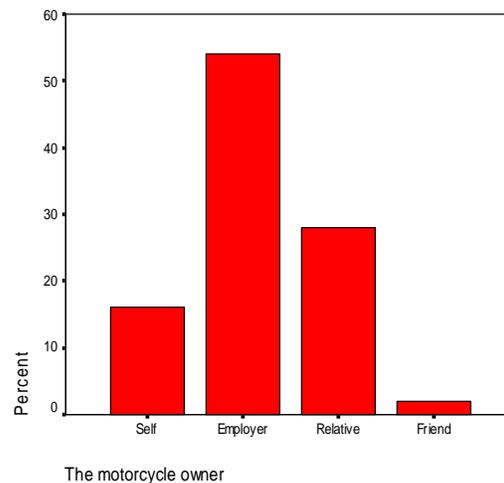


Figure 1: The nature of ownership of the *boda boda* motorcycles

The respondents were asked to state who owned the motorcycle they were using for the *boda boda* business. Most of the respondents (54%) reported that, the *boda boda* motorcycles belonged to those who had employed them to work. This suggests that even though the youths are the ones operating the *boda boda* business, they actually do not own the motorcycles. Only 16% of the riders owned their *boda boda* motorcycles.

The agreement between the riders and the *boda boda* motorcycle owners (employers) friends and relatives was not uniform neither was it binding. It was not even written down. There is therefore a risk of exploitation of the riders who must bring in the agreed amount at the end of the day. For the majority of the respondents, the owner, relatives or friends would require a certain amount of the day's income to be given to them in the evening. For some, a 50-50 agreement of sharing the income is what is used. For most of the respondents, maintenance of the motorcycle was left to them. It is therefore paramount for the government to play the affirmative action to support the youths to acquire motorcycles of their own. Because soon the riders may get frustrated for working many hours a day and getting very little to cater for their needs. Furthermore this arrangement of hiring the youth and demanding a certain amount of money at the end of the day may increase incidences of accidents and therefore reduced motorcycle safety. This is because the riders may resort to over speeding and overload to hit the target for the day for the employer and still have some money to take home.

The Role of Boda Boda Motorcycles in Employment Creation for the Young People

As shown on table 2 below, majority of the riders interviewed were jobless before becoming *boda boda* riders. This therefore means that *boda boda* has become a source of income to many secondary graduates who would otherwise be idle and unemployed.

Table 2: Respondents Job before joining *boda boda* business

The job you were doing before becoming a <i>boda a boda</i> rider	Frequency	Percent
Business/hawker	2	4
Casual laborer	7	14
Jobless	35	70
Car driver	2	4
Jua kali	2	4
Farmer	1	2
Carpenter	1	2
Total	50	100

The number of years worked in the *boda boda* sub sector by respondents varied but a majority (76%) had worked between 1-3 years. This can partly be explained to the fact that the zero rating of the motorcycles below 250cc (in 2008) made motorcycle more available due to their reduced prices (Kenya economic survey, 2010). This is probably the time when most riders got into the *boda boda* business.

On being asked whether the *boda boda* business had changed their financial situation for the better, majority of the respondents (86%) reported that it had greatly changed their financial status for the better. (See table 3) The most important thing most of the respondents reported was that "now" they could meet their basic needs. Others stated financial freedom while others had even opened a bank account to start saving.

Table 3: Respondents *boda boda* business and their changed financial status

Has <i>boda boda</i> changed your financial status	Frequency	Percent
Yes	43	86
No	7	14
Total	50	100

The respondent's income per day varied but on average, majority went home with between Kshs 400-600 (52%). Only (4%) of the respondents got above Kshs 1000 while (32%) of the respondents got between Kshs 100-300 per day. This is represented in figure 2 below. With the high living standards in Kenya today, this income may not be sufficient to take care of all the financial needs of a family. To make more money the riders may engage in dangerous riding practices in order to make more money for the day.

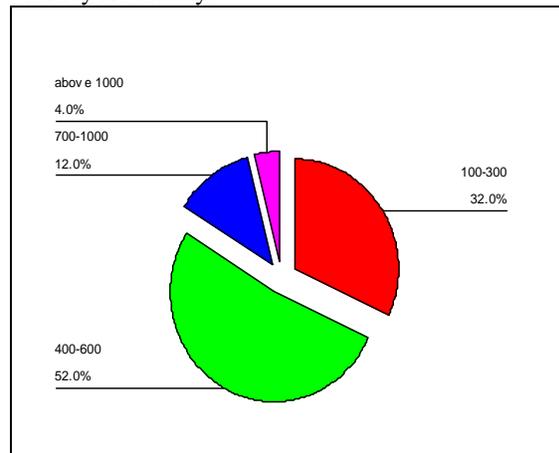


Figure 2: Respondent's income per day

According to table 4 below, the respondents were positive that the *boda boda* business was creating jobs for the young people in Kitengela division. The

majority (76%) thought that the *boda boda* business a good source of income for the young people. A majority (76%) of the respondents thought that there was a bright future in the *boda boda* business while (24%) though that future was not bright.

Table 4: A frequency distribution of *boda boda* as an employment opportunity

Are <i>boda boda</i> motorcycles creating jobs for the youths	Frequency	Percent
Yes	38	76
No	7	14
Somehow	4	8
Don't know	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

Motorcycle (*boda boda*) Safety Concerns

In the study, of the 50 respondents interviewed, 27 (54%) reported to have gone through a formal training in riding while 23 (46%) had not. Also, 68% reported having not been involved in any motorcycle accident since they started the work while 32% had been involved. On the use of helmets, 20% reported to be using helmets always while another 40% used helmets sometimes. There is needed to ensure that safety issues are taken care of to avoid deaths and injuries that can be a burden to the individual affected and economy in general.

Table 5: A frequency distribution of respondents training

Formal training	Frequency	Percent
Yes	27	54
No	23	46
Total	50	100

Without proper training on how to ride, the riders are bound to be involved in many accidents. Because unlike a car, a motorcycle is far much dangerous and prone to accidents. This is because motorcyclists often share the traffic space with fast-moving cars, buses and trucks. In addition, their lack of physical protection makes them particularly vulnerable to being injured if they are involved in a collision. Motorcycle riders are at an increased risk of being involved in a crash (ACEM, 2004).

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

With the high rate of unemployment among the young people in Kenya, there is need to come up with innovative ways of creating employment. Many young people graduate from high school and colleges but do not get job opportunities. This sometimes leads them to crime and or criminal activities. Therefore, for Kenya to achieve the millennium development goals of eradicating poverty, the young people, the government and other stakeholders must work together to ensure that this goal is attained. The use of *boda boda* motorcycle is one way of creating employment and therefore needs to be streamlined to improve

efficiency and reduce the many accidents involving motorcycles. This can be done by the government initiating rider specific driving schools to encourage formal training for riders and proper legislation. The young people should also be guarded against exploitation by the 'rich' who buy the motorcycle and employ them to ride. The government and other stakeholders should come up with a scheme that can enable many youths to buy their own motorcycles and operate them.

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