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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the role of transport system in rural development in Okpe L.G.A of Delta State. It has been observed that untarred/seasonal roads and foot track dominates in the study area. Lack of good roads in the study area has great negative impacts on the socio-economic activities of the rural communities. The reviewed literature showed that transport system have been faced with numerous problems due to poor road maintenance and bad road, lack of fund to construct good roads, poor road network. A total of 150 questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the selected areas of Okpe L.G.A of Delta State. The hypothesis formulated was tested using Chi-Square techniques. The result of the findings indicates that transport system has a significant impact on rural development in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State. The findings also reveals that transport system has played significant role in the development of Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between the causes of road accident on urban/rural road and the problems of transport system in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State. The study recommended that the government and private organizations should organize public awareness programs on the dangers of inexperience driving alongside the positive role of transport system on rural development.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Most of the journeys made by the rural poor are for subsistence tasks. For them, access to local facilities and the primary transport network is critical during times of need, especially for health, social and economic reasons (Ahmed and Donovan, 2012). Improvements to the primary village network of paths, tracks, culverts, and access routes that reduce the burden of basic household and productive tasks, as well as the increased availability of intermediate modes of transport with larger carrying capacity are likely to have a greater initial impact on the well-being of the poor in Nigeria rural areas (Kishiue, *et al*, 2005). Therefore, improving transport within a village is as important to the poor and very poor as providing access to markets outside the village. Dakyes and Ogbuli, (2012) opined that market roads should be designed to follow the Christaller's traffic principle and accordingly pass through the largest possible number of villages. They added that each incoming hinterland to market road ought to have a complement of dendritic feeder roads branching out into the various villages. Access to good markets for rural communities to dispose off their farm produce should be considered a matter of urgency by the government (Todaro, 1981). This will no doubt enhance the income level of the people thereby reducing the level of poverty in the rural areas especially in Nigeria. The poor require genuinely integrated programs of support right through the cycles of production, transportation, and sale (Owen, 1987). The poor need support to make use of the opportunities that rural roads may bring. For the poor to travel for productive purposes, the provision of transport services must

be linked to some livelihood and income diversification activity that builds on or supplements their existing subsistence activities. Therefore an integrated rural development will be an inevitable path of success for the rural communities (Starkey, 2001).

It can be established It has been observed that untarred/seasonal roads and foot track dominates in the study area. Lack of good roads in the study has great negative impacts on the socio-economic activities of the rural communities. Studies has shown that improvement in transportation by given priority in road development will no doubt enhance the socio-economic activities of the study area thereby improving the well-being of the people in the area (Dakyes and Ogbuli, 2012).

Atubi and Onokala (2004b) pointed out that "in human geography, one of the most fundamental themes is spatial interaction. That spatial interaction involves the movement of goods and services and people between various centres in space. In general, when constructing or improving a road network where economical solution for one road link may not necessarily be the best solution for the network as a whole. That the cost of implementing one project to high standards may consume resources that would be better spent over the whole network, or infilling other gaps in the network with lower standard roads.

Furthermore, for any meaningful division of labour and specialization in production process to take place in any society (such as Okpe L.G.A of Delta state) there must be an efficient and effective means of transport (Atubi and Onokala 2004a). The various Feeder roads and paths are constructed to connect the interior parts of the region and this gives room or serve as an advantage to motorcycle (Okada) and tricycle (Keke napep) transport system in Okpe L.G.A of Delta State.

Rural areas in Okpe L.G.A of Delta State are characterized by poor roads. In virtually all the cases, these roads are perpetually in a state of despair. Yet, it is on these deplorable roads that the rural dwellers trek daily to obtain water, firewood, farm produce and also to secure services from such places as markets, schools and clinic (Okoko, 2011). Rural dwellers also rely on these poorly maintained roads to transport crops, raw materials and foodstuff that are meant for consumption in the urban areas. Rural roads play a governing role in the development of rural areas. Research scholars are unanimous and unequivocal in their assertion that rural development is predicted on efficient rural transportation infrastructure (Idachaba 1981, Adeniji 2007; Ogunsanya and Ojetola, 1993; Oyekunle, 1995, and Ovbude, 2000).

The consensus reached by these scholars is that the inadequacy of rural transportation facilities is an insidious encumbrance to rural development. As Filani (2008) put it, "one of the major pre-requisites of efficient functioning of an area is the facility for the movement of people, people, goods and services quickly and economically" Ogunsanya and Ojetola (1993) corroborate this, when they asserted that the need for transport arises in any economy that is distributed over space. Ademiluyi and Solanke (2002) vehemently adumbrated that adequate and efficient rural feeder road network serves as one of the channels for the collection and exchange of goods and services, movement of people and dissemination of information.

They went further to over that rural roads are helpful in enhancing rural productivity as well as in strengthening the socio-economic, cultural and political fabrics and processes of the rural communities. To use their words, rural road provision forms intrinsic part of rural development strategies, serving as a mechanism and catalyst for rural transformation. Scholars have further established a close and positive relationship between improved rural transport and economic development (Levy, 2016, Ahmed and Hossian, 1990, Howe, 2011). Their contention is that improved rural accessibility and mobility are capable of reducing the level of poverty of rural people because the basic necessities of life such as health care delivery, education to them. Improved accessibility can reduce the degree of deprivation among rural settlements either within themselves or between them and the urban market (Olawale, Aloba, and Adetunji, 2010). As a result of these factors, there has been a tremendous demand for public transport in our towns and villages in recent years. It is against this background that this study is carried out to look intensively at the role of transport system in rural development using Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State as a case study.

1.2 Statement of Problem

One of the fundamental problems of man since antiquity is that of overcoming the friction of distance both in space and time. Man has been on the move from one place to another seeking for a means of survival. The emergence of modern means of transportation in the world and most importantly in developing countries like Nigeria has a remarkable influence on the socio-economic development of rural areas. Transportation to some in the urban settings is a choice not a concern (Dakyes and Ogbuli, 2012). However, in rural setting the availability of transportation is often limited if provided at all. Transportation enhances the process of economic growth in rural areas by making needed services available to rural dwellers. It has been discovered that the lack of good roads in the Nigeria cities, town and villages makes it difficult for the people to access good markets for their farm produce as more than 86.6% of roads in the area are very bad. This was discovered to have affected the socio-economic activities of the people thereby increasing the level of poverty in the communities in Nigeria cities and villages (Dakyes and Ogbuli, 2012). Rural residents need to receive essential social services such as medical care, go to work, purchase food and household items, attend school events and access many other services just as their urban counterparts. However, frequent accessibility is restricted or limited because of the distance to those services and even when transportation is available, the transport networks are in bad condition. Most a times special needs that can be alleviated through medical facilities, social service, educational programmes are forgone because of distance to be travelled. Lack of good motorable roads in many rural areas in Nigeria has been the main hindrances to rapid development (Dakyes and Ogbuli, 2012). This affects maximum exploitation of natural resources, expansion of trade between communities, neglect on development of human resources which all result in isolation, and underdevelopment of the rural areas (Ahmed and Donovan, 2012). Todaro (1981), view development as a multi-dimensional process involving change in structure, habit attitude and institution as well as

acceleration of economic growth. There is a significant relationship between transportation and development process. However, the nature of interaction is still a subject of debate between scholars who say development depends on many factors such as availability of resources and level of technology. In all, transportation is of great significance to development in any society. An efficient transportation system is in many ways, the bedrock of any social and economic system in terms of improving the quality of life for the common person. Owen (1987) and Kishiue, *et al* (2005), have demonstrated direct relationship between transport and development. He opined that the nations of the world may be divided into two groups: The mobile; and immobile. These two groups are categorized into five stages as follows: Period of immobility and traditional society; Period of internal improvement and growth of trade; Period of greater mobility and higher standards of living reflected in transportation, mechanization and industrialization; Development of motorization and the new mobility; and the air-age and conquest (Ahmed and Donovan, 2012).

Roads are clearly a critical enabling condition for improving living conditions in rural areas. However, the distribution of socioeconomic benefits resulting from a rural road is a separate issue, and there are no guarantees or inherent mechanisms to ensure that these benefits will be distributed equitably between the poor and the non-poor in communities (Asian Development Bank, 2006). The rural areas suffer poor accessibility which in turn has strong negative effects on the people's economic activities.

Most of the rural dwellers are farmers much of their farm produce are lost when they cannot be transported to the markets, cities and other urban centres (Starkey, 2001). This dampens their productive efforts and also restricts demand for food crops among villages. Since virtually all the villages are themselves food crop producers, the effect of this spatial restriction creates an artificial local glut. This therefore depresses prices of agricultural produce and has a very strong negative impact on the villagers. Transportation leads to economic development through the linkage of area of production with area of consumption (Abegunde *et al*, 2005). If an area increases accessibility due to increase in transportation a linkage, its market potential also increases. Transportation facilitates the movement of raw materials from rural areas to urban areas as well as the evacuation of finished goods to the consumer and reduces waste from over production and stabilizes prices. Recent studies show that Nigeria has had an improvement in road density but the concentration is mostly in the main town and most rural areas have remain inaccessible in the absence of roads, farm produce are lost and production reduced to a minimal level.

Aloba (2015) highlighted the nexus between rural transportation and rural development and noted that no society can exist above subsistence level without a measure of improvement in its transport system. In his words, where good surfaced roads are found in the rural areas, residents have reacted positively to the presence of such rural amenity by stepping up their productivity and the area under cultivation.

Rural settings have their own inalienable and unassailable peculiarities that distinguish them unmistakably from the urban settings. They are often characterized by lack of basic infrastructure like pipe-borne water, electricity, good road and other related infrastructural

services. Rural transport is the provision of transport facilities as well as short distance movements between an urban centre and the surrounding rural areas, between two rural settlements or between rural settlements and the farmlands that belong to them (Ademiluyi and Solanke, 2002). The conditions of most rural roads are often useful and their density is generally low when compared to inter-urban and intra-urban roads. Most of the rural roads are impassable during rainy seasons, due to this the affected communities are alienated from other neighbouring communities. Moreover, some of the vehicles that ply on roads are not road worthy and are also unlicensed. Consequently, they are generally slow, irregular, inefficient and unsafe (Aloba, 2013).

Motorized transport costs are usually very high during rainy season because of poor roads and incessant breakdown of vehicles. As Adeniji (2007) noted, the ability of agricultural and forest freight to absorb motorized transport costs varies according to the purpose and type of agricultural concerns are found to be more able to absorb public transport costs than the subsistence primary produces in the rural areas. As a result, a sizeable number of rural dwellers resort to head portage, bicycles, land-draw carts, pick up vans and other forms of adapted or informal transport modes such as “*to-fro*” in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State in particular and Nigeria in general. Therefore, the study intends to address the problems which affect transportation system and rural development.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The main of this study is to look intensively and truly point out the role of transport system in rural development: a case study of Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State.

However, the specific objectives are to;

1. examine the various means of transport system in the study area.
2. Examine the major problems of road transport in Okpe south Local Government Area of Delta State.
3. Identify the role of transport system in the development of rural areas especially in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State.
4. Examine the major cause (s) of roads accidents on urban and rural roads in the area.
5. Ascertain the level of development of the rural areas in the study area.
6. Proffer or suggest lasting solution (s) to the problems of transportation in the study area.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research question (s) will be asked in the study;

1. What are the various means of transportation in the area?
2. What are the major problems of road transport in the area?
3. What role has transport system played in the development of rural areas?
4. What are the major causes of road accident on urban/rural roads in the area?
5. What is the level of development of the rural areas in the area?
6. What do you think are the possible solution (s) to the problem of transportation in the area?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis will be tested in this study.

1. Transport system has no significant impact on rural development in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State.
2. Transport system has not played any significant role in the development in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State.
3. There is no significant relationship between the causes of road accident on urban/rural road and the problems of transportation Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to look intensively at the role of transport system in rural development: a case study of Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State. It will also afford the management of the transport system in the area and the problems resulting from poor network in rural areas.

This study will also address the problems of road transportation especially road accident which constantly pose serious threat to the lives of the rural dwellers since it has been observed that fatal accidents mostly occur on rural roads.

It is also hoped that this study will create awareness on the role of transport system in the development of rural areas and the level of development in the rural areas. It is also hoped that people in the area especially road users and commuters will take precautionary measures against road accidents from this study.

And lastly, it is hoped that the methodology and statistical analysis used in this study will provide a useful base for further researchers who might wish to carry out useful investigation in the area.

1.6 STUDY AREA

The study area, Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State is located in the south-south geo-political and in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Okpe is one of the major Local Government Areas that make up the 25 L.G.s of Delta State. It is mainly dominated by the Okpe language speaking ethnic group (Asagba, 2005). Okpe Kingdom comprises of 12 communities/villages. These villages are Orerokpe, Elume, Amuokpokpo, Olan, Onoghro, Okuoke, Ogiedi, Inabome, Igbimidaka, Jakpa, Oyohe and Okwugbude. The study area will be discussed under the following sub-heading;

1.6.1 Location and Size

The present study area, Okpe lies between latitudes $5^{\circ}38'10''$ North of the equator and longitudes $5^{\circ}54'10''$ East of the Greenwich Meridian. Orerokpe is the headquarter of Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State. Okpe is bounded in the North by Ethiope West and Sapele Local Government Areas, in the east by Ethiope East L.G.A, in the south by Ugheli South Local Government Area of Delta State and in the west by Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State (Asagba, 2005). Okpe kingdom shares boundaries with Oghara, Mosogar, Idjerhe, Agbarho, Agbon, Ughievwe and Uvwie communities.

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