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**WOMEN, RELIGION AND
CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC
TRANSPORT SERVICE IN
KANO METROPOLIS.**



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WOMEN, RELIGION AND CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICE IN KANO METROPOLIS.

Abstract:

This paper was written during the masterclass entitled “New Forms of Popular Transports of Goods and Persons in Nigeria” coorganised by IFRA, Columbia University and Sciences Po paris. It was held in July 2018 at the Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Training and Research (Mambayya House) in Kano and included workshops, lectures and a day of field research in the city. In this paper, authors investigate the role of gender in public transports services in Kano metropolis

Introduction

Kano Metropolis is the biggest commercial and industrial centre in Northern Nigeria, with several marketplaces distributed around the city which resulted for high demand of transportation. It is of paramount importance in the life of any city to provide means of interaction and integration of various centres and sectors for economic growth. The city is connected with road network linking various places using private and public means of transport such as buses, taxis and tricycle⁴. In spite of this, commuters are faced with challenges in using public transport especially gender segregation which has been attributed to either cultural or religious factors.

There had been little studies focusing on gender and transportation. Tanu Priya Uteng noted that this line of enquiry gradually evolved in the Western world in order to address the situation where the need of a respective gender [women] was getting restricted.⁵ Scholars Daniel Agbioba and Yusuf Madugu also address evolution and sociology of transport service and workers inin Lagos and Abuja⁶.

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⁴ Usually referred to as Adaidaita Sahu.

⁵ Uteng, Tanu Priya. 2011. Gender and Mobility in the Developing World. *World Development Report, 2012. Gender Equality and Development*. 10

⁶ Agbioba, Daniel. 2017. (a) Conflict Analysis in ‘World Class’ Cities; (b) Mobile bodies of meaning; (c) ‘No condition is Permanent’ and Madugu, Yusuf. 2018. ‘Filling the Mobility Gaps; 2017. ‘From Motorcycles to Tricycle’.

More precisely, the reference to provision of separate intra-city transport service for women and children as noted by Madugu⁷ informed the need to examine women's interaction with public transport services in Kano metropolis. This exploratory paper thus investigates the factors that influence the modes and choices of transportation of women and the activities of Hisbah Board in relation to transport services in Kano concerning women.

METHODS

The research enquiry engaged qualitative methods using interviews and participants observation over a day. With the help of a Hausa speaker, among the 3-member team, interviews were conducted with 15 respondents both men and women, including tricycle operators we boarded along Gwammaja-Miltara road to explore individual perspective on the research enquiry. The headquarter of Hisbah boards in Dala and Fagge local government areas were also visited to understand the functions and influence of their operations on transport service in Kano especially in relation to physical movement and interactions of women using public transport.

⁷ Madugu, M. Yusuf. 2017. From Motorcycle to Tricycle: Security Challenges and Re-emergence of Tricycle in Kano Metropolis. In Research Masterclass Reader for New Forms of Popular Transport of Goods and Persons in Nigeria Workshop. 75



1 Team Supervisor Dr Emilie Guitard © Adejoke Adetoro

2 Research Team L-R: Lawan Maikudi, Kayode Ashamu and Adejoke Adetoro © Emilie Guitard

HISBAH AND ITS ACTIVITIES IN KANO METROPOLIS

Hisbah is a monitoring mechanism that is based on Islamic paradigm⁸. Hisbah initially started as a religious induced *Committee* before the year 2000 with no definite structure but functions as volunteers to promote Islamic practice in the State⁹. By 2003, the Kano State House of Assembly passed a law regulating the Hisbah; it includes the creation of a board composed of representatives of the main security agencies to oversee the affairs of the board and

⁸ Azrin, Ibrahim 2017. Hisbah in Human Management: An Analysis on Contemporary Research Patterns. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Science*. Vol 7 No. 12. 3

⁹ Interview with Admin officer, Hisbah Board, Dala Local government. 04:07:2018.

ensure they are carrying out their duties properly.¹⁰ Their duties cut across social services and religious and coercive disciplinary functions, including traffic control and preventing the mixing of sexes in public transport.¹¹

In trying to strengthen the effort of the government in ensuring the practice of the Islamic law, Shari'ah, in 2004, the administration of Malam Ibrahim Shekarau banned the operation of commercial motorcyclists (which was a popular means of transport service) from carrying female passengers. This was also motivated by political and religious factors which necessitated the re-introduction of tricycle and helped facilitate the social re-orientation project, *Adaidaita Sahu*, of the Malam Ibrahim Shekarau led government in connection with Islamic law.

Between 2004 and 2007, the then Governor of Kano State Malam Ibrahim Shekarau re-introduced once again the tricycle as a means of intra-city transport service performing the function of conveying only women and children. This was an effort of the government to observe the practice of *Shari'ah* Islamic Law by preventing interaction between men and women in the intra-city passenger transport.¹²

However, for political differences, when Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso came in to power as governor for the second time (2011-2015) the social re-orientation program that introduced the tricycles was scrapped. This liberalised the policy of segregation in public transport even without official announcement.¹³

HISBAH BOARD AND TRAFFIC SERVICES

The departmentalization of the Hisbah board into units was majorly done based on specific duties as described in the picture below.

¹⁰ The enforcement of Shari'a and the Role of The Hisbah, retrieved from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/nigeria0904/8.htm> on 07:07:2018.

¹¹ NSRP. 2016. Sharia Implementation in Northern Nigeria Over 15 Ye: The Case of Hisbah. Policy Brief No.2

¹² Madugu, U. Yusuf. 2017. From Motorcycle to Tricycle: Security Challenges and Re-emergence of Tricycle in Kano Metropolis. In Research Masterclass Reader for New Forms of Popular Transport of Goods and Persons in Nigeria Workshop. 75.

¹³ Personal interaction with Madugu Yusuf on 07:07:2018.



3The Hisbah Organogram © Kayode Ashamu

The Traffic Department

This department is saddled with the following functions:

- Decongesting traffic.
- Control of traffic
- Concerned with the use of flyovers
- To help in the crossing of women and children
- Assists relevant agencies in arresting defaulters of traffic rules.¹⁴

The officials of this department are majorly distinguished from and identified by their grey shirt- black trouser-black cap uniforms, with no weapon. According to the Admin officer we met, the deployment of Hisbah Traffic officers to strategic points of duty is based on the volume of traffic and the number of schools within a specific radius. In the case of high volume of traffic, 2 officers are deployed, while in the case of less traffic, one officer only is deployed from the Hisbah office.¹⁵

The study reveals that women and children are given specific attentions when it comes to crossing roads across Kano metropolis. This was confirmed by a Hisbah officer who asserted that “we are

¹⁴ Interview with Admin officer, Hisbah Board, Dala Local government. 04:07:2018.

¹⁵ Interview with Admin officer, Hisbah Board, Dala Local government. 04:07:2018.

here to help women and children specifically to cross the road because in our area there are many schools.”¹⁶ Some women also confirmed that there are difficulties for women and children especially when it comes to crossing and that they would prefer the Hisbah officers be on the road to help them to cross.

To ease the crossing of women and children, the government opened up and lowered down some parts of the metal fences demarcating the roads, as seen in the picture below along Miltara road. However, there seems to be a problem with the opened fence, as a woman identifies that a lot of risk still abounds in it. For people to be able to pass through the dedicated place, they have to pass under the fence. She opined that if government can increase the numbers of pedestrian bridges or underpasses, as it has done in other areas such as Kruna or Bacharawa, it will also help to reduce the problem¹⁷.



4 The barricade provided for crossing © Emilie Guitard

6 Hisbah traffic officer helping school children to cross the road by Hisbah board headquarters Fagge © Adejoke Adetoro

¹⁶ Interview with Assistant Officer in Command (AOC), Hisbah Traffic Unit, Fagge Local Government Area, Kano State. 04:07:2018

¹⁷ Interaction with an anonymous woman 04:07:2018.

Beyond the services of traffic control, the activities of Hisbah officers concern also women's uses of transport service in Kano metropolis, especially in the areas of choice of transport service and sitting pattern in public transport.

According to the Commandant of Hisbah board Malam Aminu Ibrahim Daurawa, the segregation of women and men in public transport would accord female gender its 'God's ordained dignity':

Islam teaches dignity for women and this requires that we protect them and care for them. It is not ethical therefore for a woman to sit very close to a man who is not her husband to the extent that they would be robbing shoulders.¹⁸

In the meantime, the assistant inspector of the traffic unit at Hisbah board Fagge recognises that segregation between men and women in public transport has no direct relation with the activities of Hisbah. According to him, since there is no law or regulation binding this, it is self-thought from local religious "traditions": "women choose to take separate transport services due their dignity because they know their right. Also, for fear of robbery, kidnap or any social crime"¹⁹.

WOMEN AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES IN KANO METROPOLIS

It is a general notion in Kano that gender segregation in the use of public transport service is borne out of religious factor. However, this is not devoid of political influences, as the operation and functionality of programmes that inform activities are also influenced by political leadership. This is the case of the change that occurred in the *Adaidaita-Sahu* (Societal Re-orientation) programme by Ibrahim Shekarau to Community Reorientation Committee (CRC) by Rabi'u Kwankwaso.

However, during the one-day fieldwork, the team observed that there is a lot of gender mix in sitting pattern among commuters in buses, taxis and tricycles. A female student from School of Health

¹⁸ Richard P. Ngbokai, Kano, Publish Date: Oct 25 2017 2:00AM retrieved from <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/public-transport-kano-hisbah-wants-male-female-passengers-separated.html> on 05: 07:2018

¹⁹ Interview with Obediah at Hisbah Board headquarter, Fagge local Government. 04:07:2018

Technology, Kano State, interviewed during the survey narrates her experience on transport system:

If am going to school I have to come out early and spend some hours to get bus or taxi due to large number of passengers in the morning, my school is far from home and tricycle riders charge more, because they say, if they carry a woman or two, it's difficult to have another passenger, so they collect fee for three passengers from two²⁰.

Furthermore, it was observed that there is no peculiarity attached to the means of transportation when it comes to gender, as all means of transportation are occupied by both genders. However, we have collected in the meantime narratives mentioning specific rules, said to be followed by passengers to sit in different vehicules, based on their gender. For instance, "women are not allowed to sit shoulder to shoulder with and or between men"²¹.

Few respondents underlined also that this ethic is induced by the Islamic religion; "If there are men on a seat in a vehicle, I cannot sit in-between them or rather I will not enter but wait for another that has females, as my religion does not allow that"²². For a man trading veils in Rijiayan-Lemo Market as well :

This is a Muslim city, we don't mix women and men together. Men only use their own and women only use their own even if it is one passenger. But some people are just mixing both the women and men together our religion told us that men should do everything separately in terms of transportation of women since that woman is not your wife or your sister or some relation. If the woman is your relation you will go with her.²³

²⁰ Interview with female student from School of Health Technology at Rijiayan-Lemo market. 04:07:2018

²¹ Lawan, Maikudi, member of the team, Hausa speaker living in Kano. 04:07:2018

²² Interview with a Muslim woman aged 60, at Rijiayan-lemo market. 04:07:2018

²³ Intevieiw with Kabir Musa Rabi. Rijiayan-Lemo Market. 04:07:2018

For the same trader, the activities of Hisbah officers are not transport specific, as they are now more engaged in social service:

They enlighten us through the media; the television, radio station and so on. They don't usually come to stop tricycles or buses because Hisbah has found out that 80% of the people are following their law and order, they usually do not go to check whether men and women are sitting together in the bus.²⁴

These statements were confirmed by an occurrence that involved a male member of our team, Lawan:

A female passenger stopped the bus where we were seated, which was full. Lawan, member of the team living in Kano, offered to sit on the bench sideways, for the lady to enter. Then he took back the seat after some passengers alighted at another bus-stop. Lawan commented that he had to sit sideways so as not rub knees with the woman.

²⁴ Interview with Kabir Musa Rabi. Rijiayan-Lemo Market. 04:07:2018



5 Mixed passengers sitting in the bus © Emilie Guitard 8 8 Female School Children boarding a tricycle as charter close at Rijia Ilemo© Emilie Guitard

On the other hand, another woman interviewed expressed that “I do not have a problem with that, I am an old woman. But when I see many men in the tricycle or bus I usually do not go there”²⁵. We observed also a tricycle filled up with six young women, including two of them sitting side by side the driver, in close body contact with him. In another tricycle woman was sitting in-between a male passenger and the male conductor. Finally, in two different tricycles, we noticed first two passengers, male and female, sitting at the back far from each other, and then in the second tricycle, a man sitting very close to a female passenger (wearing a *niqab*²⁶).

Hence, these observations on the ground question the narratives collected among passengers and city-dwellers of Kano, but also with Hisbah officers, on the strict observance of gendered sitting arrangements in various means of transportation as prescribed by religion. Finally, in Sabongari neighbourhood, accommodating non-Hausa residents, for some of them non-Muslim, practices were observed to be quite different. This place is often seen to accommodate forms of lifestyle different from those observable in

²⁵ Interaction with an old woman at Rijiayan-Lemo market.

²⁶ A Muslim woman with a veil over face.

the other parts of the city of Kano. Here, gender induced behaviours in different forms of vehicular mobility is not so evident, as mentioned by an Igbo woman interviewed there by the team:

This practice [gender segregation in transports] is seen to be religious. I am not a Muslim and I can't practice what they are doing because it does not affect me. I enter into any form of transport I would like to enter, which often time is determined by the amount of money I have, sometimes the kind of route I take or the purpose of travel. Anytime I sit shoulder to shoulder with any man in any vehicle they of call me all sort of names. This cannot be seen in Sabongari, no one cares about this practice there, we are free to move however we want.²⁸

Conclusion

Public transport systems provide mobility for people and goods. They influence also patterns of physical movement as well as economic activities, through the accessibility they provide to various centres within a city.

Kano is referred to as an Islamic state and has, at the institutional level, preference to follow Islamic law and order owing to its large population of Muslims. This in-turn determines specific narratives about the respect of gender segregation in public transports, so as to conform notably to religious injunctions stipulated by Islamic law. However, the participant observation conducted during one day in the city of Kano, along its roads and within the vehicles, questions the narratives collected among passengers and city-dwellers of Kano, but also with Hisbah officers, on the strict observance of gendered sitting arrangements in various means of transportation as prescribed by religion.

²⁸ Interview opposite the National Orthopedic Hospital, Kano. 04:07:2018.