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## **Hoodlums in Boat Jetties and Motor Parks: Effect on Commuters Case Study of Lagos State**

*Sule Abiodun*

Niomr Research, Lagos, Nigeria

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### **ABSTRACT**

The menace of hoodlum in Nigerian motor parks has become a major concern of every Nigerians as their activities is no longer affecting only commuters but also passengers whose transport fares are doubled to accommodate the money that is extorted by the hoodlums. The problem is further compounded to the fact that these hoodlums used violent and destroys people's lives and properties. The study investigated hoodlums' activities in boat jetties and motor parks and its effects on commuters. The study adopted questionnaire for data collection and its analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics. 500 respondents participated in the study and the result indicated that commuters are not happy with the activities of hood since they will rather preferred motor parks and boat jetties to be conveniences, waiting area/ lounge, refreshment facilities, and safe and properly regulated service. The study also revealed that several types of hoodlum activities include: stealing, inflation of fares, illegal fee extortion, intimidation, and harassment. Again, the result of this study also indicated that the following factors influencing the activities of hoodlums in motor parks and boat jetties: Lack of care from the government in absence of their parents; Unemployment; Poor wages; Poor living conditions; and peer pressure. Based on these results, conclusions were drawn and recommendations made.

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**Keywords:** Hoodlums, motor parks, boat jetties, commuters

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### **Introduction**

A common sight that greets the eye in motor parks and boat jetties is the presence of hoodlums, commonly referred to as touts and agberos. Hoodlum is used to describe an outfit of dreaded youths mostly found in urban cities, who base their survival on exploitative dependence of public transport in Lagos state. Hoodlums are predominantly made up of male youths, who mostly convert bus-stops, motor parks, roads, and junctions to their operational base in order to extort money from commercial bus operators under the guise of being a union or association. Refusal to comply to their demands often results to physical assaults on their victims and their vehicles. Their physical appearance includes having a short temper, scarred face, willing to get into a fight at the slightest excuse, and usually under the influence of Indian hemp and alcohol (Adedayo & Zubairu, 2016).

The above description is not peculiar to Lagos state alone, as it is a common sight in parks in other Nigerian states, and central to the functioning of urban transportation, yet it remains an issue that has been unaddressed by scholars. The primary existence of motor parks and boat jetties is to meet the needs of passengers for a central collection point for commercial activities and movement in and around any given city. Parks, whether for vehicles or boats are meant to be conducive, however, the reverse is the case, as the environment has been made unconducive for both operators and passengers (Pius, Nwaogbe, Ogunnumesi & Guenane, 2017). The role of public transportation in the productivity of a city cannot be overemphasized on, however in Nigeria, adequate attention has not been paid to public transportation, and this seems to be a factor influencing the situation of motor parks and boat jetties in urban cities and enabling the activities of hoodlums. Hoodlum activities contribute to the dissatisfaction of commuters in parks and boat jetties, which give the transportation sector a negative image. Hoodlums are according to Ibironke (2016) are security risk that can easily be influenced to perpetrate damages to infrastructures and become security risks as they can be used by terrorist group or unscrupulous persons to cause harm to the public. In view of the foregoing, the present study investigates hoodlums in boat jetties and motor parks and the effect on commuters with a focus on Lagos state.

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### **Statement of Research Problem**

Hoodlums also referred to as touts operate in parks, markets, streets, bus stops and junctions. A lot of these hoodlums are pushed into it by unemployment and under the guise of aiding the local government authorities, extort money from vehicle operators and inconvenience commuters (Offiong, Awoyemi, Maduka, Ewa & Onogbosele, 2015). The activities of hoodlums in parks and jetties causes several problems such as delay in movement, harassment of commuters, disturbances of vehicles on the road often leading to accidents. In boat jetties, these hoodlums who are also referred to as pirates go as far as hijacking boats, which hinders' passenger movement and affects the operators. To this end, this study examines the effect of hoodlums on commuters in boat jetties and motor parks in Lagos state.

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## Research objectives

The study specifically;

1. Identify the common expectation of commuters in motor parks and boat jetties.
2. Examine the factor influencing the activities of hoodlums in motor parks and boat jetties.
3. Assess the effect of hoodlums on commuters in motor parks and boat jetties.
4. Determine the effect of hoodlums on commuters in motor parks and boat jetties.

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## Research question

1. What are the common expectation of commuters in motor parks and boat jetties?
2. What are the types of hoodlum activities at parks and jetties?
3. What are the factors influencing the activities of hoodlums in motor parks and boat jetties?
4. What is the effect of hoodlums on commuters in motor parks and boat jetties?

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## Literature review

Hoodlums popularly known in Lagos as touts/agberos/area boys are a feared group of city youths who make a living from their opportunistic dependence of extortion of public transport operators in Lagos. They are mostly male, who appropriate the spaces of motor-parks, bus stops, junctions, boat jetties (which refers to any ramp and supporting structure for vessel access to a ramp which may be used to launch or land a vessel) and roads across Lagos, using them as operational bases to extort taxes from commercial transport operators (Agbibo, 2018). They covert motor parks and jetties to places where they collect money from them daily and can go as far as physically assaulting them if they refuse to submit their income. They are deeply dreaded by transport operators and commuters because of their impunity and vicious extortion strategies.

Unemployment has pushed many persons into creating gangs generally referred to as touts, whose activities revolve round streets, markets, bus stops, motor parks, boat jetties and particularly, the transport corridors. They hang around boat jetties and motor parks, mostly claiming to be working for the government mainly the local government authorities. Most of them work for their union chairman, godfathers, and politicians (Offiong et al., 2015).

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## Effects of hoodlums' activities on commuters

Clashes between different groups of hoodlums over supremacy issues leads to the destruction of property and loss of lives which will require the presence of law enforcement agents for calm to be restored (Usman, Adelaja & Onyegbula, 2015). The presence of these hoodlums in motor parks and boat jetties can mean delay for commuters as they prevent the vehicles or boats from moving if the operators have not paid their dues. Some of these hoodlums harass female commuters by touching them inappropriately. Motorists and commuters maintained that these hoodlums are responsible for disturbances on the road, damaging cars because they are fond of struggling with drivers, which, sometimes, lead to minor or fatal accident.

From the mode of operation of these hoodlums, they ambush drivers on sight, with one struggling with the driver for the ignition key and others speedily jumping into the vehicle to damage the back seat or other vital items (Ezeh, 2020). Most commuters also believe that hoodlums work hand in hand with security personnel. Armed hoodlums suspected to be pirates attack boat jetties and make away with several, leaving commuters stranded and in panic

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## Empirical studies

Uyieh (2018) in a study provided a historical survey of the origin and expansion of the menace of touts in Lagos from 1976 when it was created till date, with reference to Shomolu Local Government Area located in the mainland part of the state and maintained that while environmental, economic and psychological factors are the foremost causes of gangsterism and criminality, it is also based on choice and rationality whether a youth becomes a criminal and tout.

Agbibo (2018) explains the transformation of agberos in view of their implicit integration into the National Union of Road Transport Workers, which politicized and transformed their role in urban transport, and argues that recent efforts to purge motor-parks of agberos is motivated by the post-1999 urban renewal project of the Lagos State Government to convert Lagos into an elite megacity.

Pius et al., (2017) in a study revealed that most of touts are males whereas only a quarter is females of which a few of them had higher education and they are engaged in all sorts' activities besides extorting money and collection of illegal fees from commuters whom they steal from and intimidate.

Offiong et al., (2015) in a study that assessed touting activities in selected motor parks in Ibadan revealed that the need to survive, unemployment and lack of care from parents made many touts venture into the vocation where they carry out nefarious activities like extortion, rape, murder vandalism and theft. Also, that 75.6% of touts were introduced into it by friends without any qualification and that their primary activities comprised collecting money from commuters, collecting union dues and calling commuters to board vehicles or boats. The study recommended that rehabilitation and employment be provided through vocational establishments.

## Theoretical framework

### Routine Activity Theory

This study adopts the routine activity theory which was founded in 1979 by Cohen and Felson has three fundamental assumptions which are: the potential offender, the suitable target (in this study, targets could be commuters or their valuable properties), and the absence of a capable guardian (who bears the capability to discourage or avert crime such as police officers and other categories of law enforcement agents. It is assumed that all three categories must come to play before a criminal activity occurs. Also, that criminals are rational in their activities and choices because they ensure that they commit their crimes in convenient locations where they can escape without any setbacks. The term "routine" can be described as a situation whereby the criminal or offender will have a routine of continuously checking his suitable targets to make sure that there is no barrier that will prevent him from embarking on his crime. The theory is important in terms of explaining the effect hoodlums of motor parks and boat jetties have on the commuters and how crime thrives and increases due all three categories listed above. This theory does not elucidate why an offender is motivated to commit a crime, but rather presumes that motivation is constant (Morrow, 2015).

## Methodology

The study is an explorative study, given that it has not studied by scholars and researchers. The study randomly selected five motor parks and five boat jetties in various areas of Lagos state; Mile two, Lagos Island, Oshodi, Ajah and Ikorodu areas. From each of these locations, 50 respondents each comprising of commuters and operators were selected making a total of one hundred respondents from each areas. The total sample size was five hundred respondents. Questionnaire was used as the source of data collection, which was structured using four point likert scale format. The questionnaires were distributed to commuters while they were waiting to board either vehicles or boats. The data derived was descriptively analyzed using frequency and percentages.

## Data Presentation and Analysis

### RQ1: What are the common expectation of commuters in motor parks and boat jetties?

**Table 1: Opinion of the Respondents on the common expectation of commuters in motor parks and boat jetties**

Statements		SA	A	D	SD	Percentage agreement (%)
Conveniences	F	248	192	8	42	88.0
	%	49.6	38.4	1.6	8.4	
Waiting area/ lounge	F	209	259	21	11	93.6
	%	41.8	51.8	4.2	2.2	
Refreshment facilities	F	248	182	28	42	86.0
	%	49.6	36.4	5.6	8.4	
Safe and properly regulated service	F	292	146	56	6	87.6
	%	58.4	29.2	11.2	1.2	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 above presents the opinion of the respondents on the common expectation of commuters in motor parks and boat jetties. As indicated in the table, all the items were accepted as all the items received more than 80% agreement from the respondents. This implies that all the commuters' expectations in motor parks and boat jetties include: conveniences, waiting area/ lounge, refreshment facilities, and safe and properly regulated service

### RQ2: What are the types of hoodlum activities at parks and jetties?

**Table 2: Types of hoodlum activities at parks and jetties**

Statements		SA	A	D	SD	Percentage agreement (%)
Stealing	F	362	105	8	25	93.4
	%	72.4	21.0	1.6	5	
Inflation of fares	F	209	259	21	11	93.6
	%	41.8	51.8	4.2	2.2	
Illegal fee extortion	F	288	182	28	2	94.0
	%	57.6	36.4	5.6	0.4	
Intimidation	F	292	126	56	26	83.6
	%	58.4	25.2	11.2	5.2	
Harassment	F	288	182	28	2	94.0
	%	57.6	36.4	5.6	0.4	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 above presents the opinions of the respondents on the various types of hoodlum activities at parks and jetties. With above 83% acceptance rate, all the items were accepted. This implies that, the following types of hoodlum activities occur in motor parks and jetties: stealing, inflation of fares, illegal fee extortion, intimidation, and harassment.

**RQ3: What are the factors influencing the activities of hoodlums in motor parks and boat jetties?**

**Table 3: Opinion of the Respondents on the factors influencing the activities of hoodlums in motor parks and boat jetties**

Statements		SA	A	D	SD	Percentage agreement (%)
Lack of care from the government in absence of their parents	F	342	105	28	25	89.4
	%	68.4	21.0	5.6	5	
Unemployment	F	219	259	21	1	95.6
	%	43.8	51.8	4.2	0.2	
Poor wages	F	248	182	28	42	86.0
	%	49.6	36.4	5.6	8.4	
Poor living conditions	F	292	126	56	26	83.6
	%	58.4	25.2	11.2	5.2	
Peer pressure	F	248	182	28	42	86.0
	%	49.6	36.4	5.6	8.4	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 above presents the opinion of the respondents on the factors influencing the activities of hoodlums in motor parks and boat jetties. With more than 85% agreement rate, all the items in the table were accepted. Based on this result, the following are factors influencing the activities of hoodlums in motor parks and boat jetties: Lack of care from the government in absence of their parents; Unemployment; Poor wages; Poor living conditions; and peer pressure.

**RQ4: What is the effect of hoodlums on commuters in motor parks and boat jetties?**

**Table 4: Opinion of the Respondents on the effect of hoodlums on commuters in motor parks and boat jetties**

STATEMENTS		SA	A	D	SD	Percentage agreement (%)
Hoodlums endanger the lives of innocent passengers	F	342	105	28	25	89.4
	%	68.4	21.0	5.6	5	
Hoodlums scare away commuters from parks	F	209	259	21	11	93.6
	%	41.8	51.8	4.2	2.2	
Hoodlums make the environment an eyesore through unconscionable and dirty acts	F	248	182	28	42	86.0
	%	49.6	36.4	5.6	8.4	
Hoodlums causes restriction of movement and longer loading time	F	292	126	56	26	83.6
	%	58.4	25.2	11.2	5.2	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 above presents the opinion of the respondents on the effect of hoodlums on commuters in motor parks and boat jetties. All the items in the table were accepted which implies that the following are the effect of hoodlums on commuters in motor parks and boat jetties: hoodlums endanger the lives of innocent passengers, they scare away commuters from parks; they make the environment an eyesore through unconscionable and dirty acts; and causes restriction of movement and longer loading time.

## Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Common in major parks and boat jetties in major Nigeria cities are some group of individual generally referred to as hoodlums, agberos or touts. These set of people are majorly youths with little or no formal education or gainful employment. To this set of people, their survival is based on the exploitation of the public. They use violence, force, or any means possible to demand unlabeled money from commuters and any resistance only attracts physical assaults on their victims and their vehicles. Their physical appearance includes having a short temper, scarred face, willing to get into a fight at the slightest excuse, and usually under the influence of Indian hemp and alcohol (Adedayo & Zubairu, 2016). One of the findings of this study revealed that commuters are not happy with the activities of hoodlums since they will rather prefer motor parks and boat jetties to be convenient, waiting area/ lounge, refreshment facilities, and safe and properly regulated service. The result agrees with Agbiboa (2018) and Offiong et al., (2015). Again, the result of this study revealed that several types of hoodlum activities abound in motor parks and jetties. Among these are: stealing, inflation of fares, illegal fee extortion, intimidation, and harassment. This result confirms that of an earlier study by Agbiboa (2018) and Uyieh (2018) respectively, who also share similar views.

Again, the result of this study indicated that the following factors influence the activities of hoodlums in motor parks and boat jetties: Lack of care from the government in absence of their parents; Unemployment; Poor wages; Poor living conditions; and peer pressure. This finding is consistent with that revealed by Agbiboa (2018), Uyieh (2018) and Ezeh (2020) respectively who also shared similar result.

All the items in the table were accepted which implies that the following are the effect of hoodlums on commuters in motor parks and boat jetties: hoodlums endanger the lives of innocent passengers, they scare away commuters from parks; they make the environment an eyesore through unconscionable and dirty acts; and causes restriction of movement and longer loading time. This result supports Usman, Adelaja and Onyegbula (2015). Based on this result, it is obvious that commuters do not willingly accept the activities of hoodlums since it has no positive impact in their business. It is therefore imperative to completely eradicate hoodlums and their activities in Lagos state parks and boat jetties. To achieve this, this study recommends that perpetrators be arrested and properly arraigned to serve as a deterrent to others. There should be increased job creation to keep our youths' mind out of crime and police enforcement should be mounted on strategic places in the road to help restore sanity in parks and boat jetties.

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**Appendix****REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Dear Respondent,

I am carrying out a study on "Hoodlums in boat jetties and motor parks, effects on commuters: case study of Lagos", and you have been chosen to be part of the study. This questionnaire is only for academic purposes. Kindly select the response which applies to you and all information will be kept confidential

Instructions: Please tick (√) as appropriate where

SA = Strongly Agree (SA), A = Agree, D = Disagree (D), SD = Strongly Disagree (SD)

**Key: Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
<b>RQ1</b>	<b>What are the common expectation of commuters in motor parks and boat jetties?</b>				
1	Conveniences				
2	Waiting area/ lounge				
3	Refreshment facilities				
4	Safe and properly regulated service				
<b>RQ2</b>	<b>What are the types of hoodlum activities at parks and jetties?</b>				
5	Stealing				
6	Inflation of fares				
7	Illegal fee extortion				
8	Intimidation				
9	Harassment				
<b>RQ3</b>	<b>What are the factors influencing the activities of hoodlums in motor parks and boat jetties?</b>				
10	Lack of care from the government in absence of their parents				
11	Unemployment				
12	Poor wages				
13	Poor living conditions				
14	Peer pressure				
<b>RQ4</b>	<b>What is the effect of hoodlums on commuters in motor parks and boat jetties?</b>				
15	Hoodlums endanger the lives of innocent passengers				
16	Hoodlums scare away commuters from parks				
17	Hoodlums make the environment an eyesore through unconscionable and dirty acts				
18	Hoodlums causes restriction of movement and longer loading time				