



BICYCLE TAXIS IN SALIMA. A STUDY OF BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES AMONG MALE YOUTH AGED 12-24

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore the bicycle taxi business to establish benefits and challenges accrued from the business by male youth aged 14 to 24 in Salima District, Malawi. The main objective of the study is to investigate the driving forces of male youth to venture into bicycle taxis and the challenges associated with the business. The following questions were raised to meet the objectives of the study: Describe the relevant socio-economic and demographic characteristics of Bicycle Taxi Operators. What drives young people to venture into the bicycle taxi business in Salima? What are the social challenges associated with operating Taxis among youth aged 14-24 years?

The method used included a background literature review which provided a conceptual framework for the study and a descriptive design which includes surveys and fact-finding inquiries to stakeholders such as bicycle operators, youth leaders, and government officials. The main findings and analysis of the study largely covered the following categories: Operator's demographic characteristics, driving forces to start operating bicycle taxis, and challenges faced by operators.

The bicycles tax business which is commonly called the 'Damp business' in Salima is dominated by poor male youth aged between 17 and 24 years, who dropped out of school, most of them married at a tender age range of 14 to 17 years. The operators face numerous challenges including passengers refusing to pay, being underpaid, being robbed by violent passengers, and some women suggesting to pay by sex.

The study establishes that male youth are driven into the business by many social issues such as school dropout due to lack of school fees to continue with their education, lack of employable skills to secure decent jobs, lack of adequate capital to venture into other safer businesses and lack of employment opportunities. The operators' purposes are to achieve their dreams of being food secured, raise funds in preparation for marriage, and build a house for their families. The analysis is leading us to appreciate that the Dampa business is a form of informal employment for many uneducated young people in the district.

Key Words: Salima District Council, Bicycle Taxi, Dampa, Youth, Bicycle taxi operators.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Background of the study

Malawi has one of the highest youth populations in the world, with 51 percent of the population under 18 years (NSO, 2019). The National Youth Policy (2013) recognizes youth as an important human resource. It noted that the well-being and contributions of young women and men are a major determinant of the current and future development of any nation (MOYS, 2013) due to their being in majority, vibrant and enthusiastic. Hence these youth should be educated and well-skilled for them to significantly contribute positively to the development of their countries. Unfortunately, a good number of young men and women in Malawi do not finish their education (NSO, 2020), for example in 2018, 55.4 percent of youth aged 25-35 had no educational qualification.

The Malawi Vision 2063 also notes the same challenge that ‘despite their significant proportion, presently and as projected in the future, young people are often faced with age-related challenges and barriers, such as relevant education and skill- sets, among other things’ (NPC, 2020). The situation leaves the youth without any opportunities to participate in economic activities. The (NSO, 2020) establishes that in Malawi 25.3 percent of youth are unemployed. These youth have nowhere to go eventually they search for easier options for sustaining their livelihood such as engagement in riding bicycles to earn a living.

In Africa, bicycle Taxis have been in operation for close to 100 years, they emerged in Senegal in the early 1930s, and they have been used to transport cross-border traders between Uganda and Kenya since the 1960s (Manda, 2014). In Malawi bicycles Taxis started appearing in early 2000, transporting people to various destinations both in urban and rural areas, they are known by different names in different areas such as Nadyanji in Thyolo and Mulanje, Kabanza in Blantyre, Dampa in Salima and Sacramento in Mzuzu. According to (Kadaluka, 2011) Sacramento is regarded as fast and efficient means of transport in Mzuzu City because of its ease of accessibility, and price.

In Salima District, the most reliable mode of transportation are bicycles commonly locally called “Dampa” (Salima DC, 2019). These can be accessed throughout the district offering door-to-door delivery and therefore very convenient. They are a very reliable and cheap form of transport, available 24 hours in most strategic places such as hospitals, bus stages, entertainment places, and residential areas. They are used to transport people, parcels and some are being used as a form of cheap transport to take children to and back from school.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Records in the social welfare office in Salima District have shown that bicycle taxis are mostly operated by boys of school-going age (between 14 and 20 years) resulting in high levels of school dropout and a surge in early marriages as they are exposed to money at an early age.

Records from the Education Office indicate that 2% of boys drop out of school as early as 13 years old in pursuit of a bicycle taxi business to generate their own money (EMIS, 2020). The challenge of getting such money at an early age has been a lack of focus in school, getting married early, and at times an increase in early sexual life leading to an increase in teenage pregnancies, incidences of HIV, and other sexually transmitted infections.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 Main objective

The main objective of the study is to investigate the driving forces of male youth aged 14 to 24 years to venture into bicycle taxis and the challenges associated with the business.

1.2.1.1 Specific objective

- To describe the relevant socio-economic and demographic characteristics of Bicycle taxi operators in Salima.
- To isolate drivers that force young people into the bicycle taxi business.

- To investigate challenges associated with operating bicycle Taxis among youth aged 14-24.

1.3 Research Question

- Describe the relevant socio-economic and demographic characteristics of Bicycle Taxi Operators?
- What drives young people to venture into the bicycle taxi business in Salima?
- What are the social challenges associated with operating Taxis among youth aged 14-24 years

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it helped to unearth what pushes young people at their tender age to venture into the bicycle taxi business in Salima district. The study also helped to identify economic benefits associated with operating a bicycle taxi and isolated social challenges that are arising as a result of venturing into bicycle taxis by male youth aged 14-24 years. The study is important because it will contribute to the body of knowledge on education and social issues hindering young people from finishing their education and how to deal with them.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in Salima District, Salima Central constituency in Traditional Authorities Kalonga and Salima. It targeted bicycle taxi operators aged between 14 and 24 years. A total of 120 operators were interviewed.

1.6 Theoretical review

1.6.1 Labour supply theory

States that the Labor supply is the total hours (adjusted for the intensity of effort) that workers wish to work at a given real wage rate. It is frequently represented graphically by a Labor supply curve, which shows hypothetical wage rates plotted vertically and the amount of Labor that an individual or group of individuals is willing to supply at that wage rate plotted horizontally (Tu, 2021)

According to the neoclassical labor supply model, it can be predicted that working hours should respond positively to temporary positive wage changes, that is, workers should work more when wages are higher, and consume more when wages are lower.

There are three distinct aspects to labor supply or expected hours of work: the fraction of the population who are employed, the average number of hours worked by those that are employed, and the average number of hours worked in the population as a whole. The study on bicycle taxis can correlate easily with the Labor supply theory. With the growing use of bicycle taxis, more people are traveling using this mode of transport for short distances, this means more customers, more working hours, and more energy required for every single rider.

1.7 Conceptual Review

1.7.1 Positive Youth Development Model

Positive Youth Development is a policy perspective that emphasizes providing services and opportunities to support all young people in developing a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and empowerment (Arnold, 2020). While individual programs can provide youth development activities, the youth development approach works best when entire communities including young people are involved in creating a continuum of services and opportunities that youth need to grow into happy and healthy adults.

Key elements of the Youth Development approach are the following:

- The first one is that youth are viewed as a valued and respected asset to society, hence they should be used and involved to benefit society, operating bicycle taxis is one of those roles that the youth can be involved in.

- The second one is to do with policies and programs to focus on the evolving developmental needs and tasks of adolescents, and involve youth as partners rather than clients; this requires consulting and involving the youth at all levels of policy development and implementation. The policies could range from national to community bylaws, therefore policies to recognize and regulate bicycle taxi transport could form part of this.
- Lastly, families, schools, and communities are engaged in developing environments that support youth; for youth to thrive they require a conducive environment, hence everyone should be seen providing this to the youth, for example, city and district councils should be able to create an environment where youth engaged in bicycle taxis can operate freely and safely

1.8 Observations, findings, and research gaps

1.8.1 Observations

The bicycle taxi transport sector is not organized and regulated in Malawi; its operation is not formally recognized by the authority hence not given the attention that it requires

1.8.2 Findings

Bicycle transport is the widely used form of transport, it is recognized as an accessible, equitable, affordable, and sustainable mode of transport compared to motorized transport across the globe. Literature has shown that in the developed world bicycle use is categorized under Non-motorized Transport (NMT) and considered a form of transport that has to be developed as it offers huge social, economic, environmental, and health benefits for urban and rural areas. However, in developing countries including Africa, it is used to improve the efficiency of productive tasks and to serve as a link between farms and villages, nearby road networks, and market towns (Calvo, 1994). Specifically, the bicycle is used for trips to markets and local trading centers to purchase and sell food and household items. More importantly in sub-Saharan Africa, a bicycle is an economic tool as it is used as a Taxi to generate money, and according to (Gikuri & Chetto, 2021) the bicycle taxi industry is dominated by young people, particularly males, who occupy a leading position in the transportation sector where public transportation is unavailable.

1.9.3 Research Gaps

Literature on the bicycle taxi business in Africa has ably informed us that the bicycle taxi business is dominated by male youth aged between 15 to 35 years of age both educated and uneducated. In Malawi, the review has only identified financial gains as the only driving force to join the business. However, there is little literature on the rider's age, education qualification, and other drivers to join the business. The available literature is not adequately providing answers to the effects of bicycle taxis on the rider's health and education.

1.9 Conclusion

Bicycle taxis are widely used across the globe and offer huge social, economic, and environmental benefits for urban and rural areas. In most developed countries bicycle use is categorized under Non-motorized Transport (NMT). The United Nations Environment identifies bicycle taxis as People-powered transport which takes different forms such as bicycles and rickshaws. In Africa, the review has revealed that bicycle taxis are used to improve the efficiency of productive tasks and to serve as a link between farms and villages, nearby road networks, and market towns (Calvo, 1994). Specifically, the bicycle is used for trips to markets and local trading centers to purchase and sell food and household items. In other areas, bikes are used by children to go to school and take sick family members to the clinic.

The review has also revealed that the bicycle taxi business is dominated by male youth aged between 15 to 35 years of age both educated and uneducated and that in Malawi the sector is not organized and regulated, its operation is not formally recognized by the authority hence not given the attention that it requires

People who walk, cycle, and use two- and three-wheelers are the most vulnerable group of road users. The majority of people killed on Africa's roads are young breadwinners (62% are between the ages of 15 and 44, and three out of every four deaths are males) (UNEP, 2016). In addition, taxi riders suffer high infection rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections, increased daily accidents which are killing most riders and passengers, threats of robbery, violence, theft, accidents, and poor road infrastructure.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research process and methods that were used in the study. (Trem, 2017) Describes a research design as a framework or plan for conducting a research project. It details the procedures necessary for obtaining the information needed to structure or solve research problems. A research design lays the foundation for conducting the project, good research design ensures that the research project is conducted effectively and efficiently. In summary research design is the procedure for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies (Creswell, 2012). On the other hand, research methods are the ways or techniques which researchers use to collect data for research projects. According to (Saunders, et al., 2007), there are three approaches or methods to conducting research which include qualitative methods, quantitative methods, and mixed methods.

2.2 Research Design

A literature review was conducted which helped to identify concepts and theories. The study used a descriptive design and data was collected through a survey approach, whereby themes were developed to collect quantitative data. Variables were generated and analyzed descriptively through the developed themes to generate frequencies to enable the researcher to establish the relationship between variables.

2.3 Population of the Study

The population is the aggregate of all the elements that share some common set of characteristics and that comprise the universe for the research problem (Trem, 2017). Hence population in this study were all bicycle taxi operators in Salima aged between 14 and 24 years in the two traditional authorities of Kalonga and Salima and other key informants such as government officials and youth leaders within the two areas.

2.3.1 Inclusion Criteria

The study included all operators in traditional authorities Kalonga and Salima aged between 14 and 24 years and who consented to be involved in the study.

2.3.2 Exclusion Criteria

The study excluded all operators aged above 24 years and operating outside traditional authorities in Kalonga and Salima. Secondly, the operators within the age bracket who were not willing to participate were also excluded from the study.

2.4 Sampling Procedure

Participants in the study were purposively selected based on the fact that they have operated or are operating a bicycle taxi. Later snow bowling technique was used by requesting each of the selected participants to identify a friend who was also operating a taxi business. According to (Dawson, 2002) purposive Sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which elements and sample objects are selected for a purpose, usually because of their unique position or characteristics researcher is looking for, it involves a purposive or deliberate selection of particular units of the population for constituting a sample which represents the universe. This method was used because the study was only interested in bicycle taxi operators aged 14 to 24, hence only operators with this particular characteristic were targeted for inclusion in the study.

In snowball sampling, researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested. These people are then used as informants to identify or put the researchers in touch with others who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify yet others; hence the term snowball sampling (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). This method is useful in situations such as when sampling a population where access is difficult when dealing with a sensitive topic like HIV and AIDs. The study used snowballing because the target population was always busy with business and requires a very diplomatic approach to win their attention.

2.5 Sample size

A total of 120 subjects were targeted. They included 88 operators, 20 government officials, and 10 youth leaders from the two traditional authorities of Salima and Kalonga.

2.6 Sampling Area

The study was conducted in Salima District, targeting bicycle operators aged between 14 and 24 years doing their business in the traditional authorities of Salima and Kalonga.

2.7 Sources of Data Collection

- Primary data was collected through questionnaires from bicycle taxi operators, using both open and closed-ended questions.
- Primary data was also collected from working staff of various government departments such as Education, Social Welfare, and Youth Development in addition youth leaders were also interviewed.
- Secondary data was mainly collected through a review of literature from various academic books, journals, reports, thesis, source books, newspaper articles, online sources about bicycle transport, and previous case study reviews of similar studies

2.8 Tools for Data Collection

Data collection was done using a questionnaire. (Walliman, 2011) noted that as a method of data collection, the questionnaire is a very flexible tool, that has the advantages of having a structured format, easy and convenient for respondents, and being cheap and quick to administer to a large number of cases covering large geographical areas. Hence a questionnaire is used in surveys as it enables the researcher to organize the questions and receive replies without actually having to talk to every respondent. Bearing in mind the nature of our target participants questionnaires was administered personally to each respondent, this permitted the researcher to be able to clarify difficult questions to the respondents to ensure a high response rate.

2.9 Tools for Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the SPSS computer program by clustering them into categories and organizing them into themes. It involved a descriptive analysis (for objectives 1 and 2) while objective three used content analysis which was done by quantifying the variables in terms of occurrence per the study objectives and research questions. Findings were presented in form of tables and charts where necessary to help generate themes to enable deduce meanings and commonality of occurrences.

2.10 Limitations of the Study.

The study was constrained with financial resources as there was no sponsor to support activities and it greatly limited the researcher's movements, especially during data collection. The other limitation was that some operators were not willing to give out information. Therefore, the researcher interviewed only those who consented to be interviewed.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents tables, figures, and interpretation of the analysis based on the interviews which were conducted among three targeted groups namely; bicycle taxi operators, government officials, and youth leaders. The analysis is mainly based on research questions highlighting; operators' characteristics; driving forces to start bicycle operations and challenges associated with operating bicycle taxis. The research findings are analyzed quantitatively using SPSS for graphic presentation of the findings.

3.1.1 Operators Characteristics

A total of 88 operators were interviewed in Salima town, they were asked different questions which were aimed at knowing their education qualification, the age at which they started bicycle operation, and their marital status

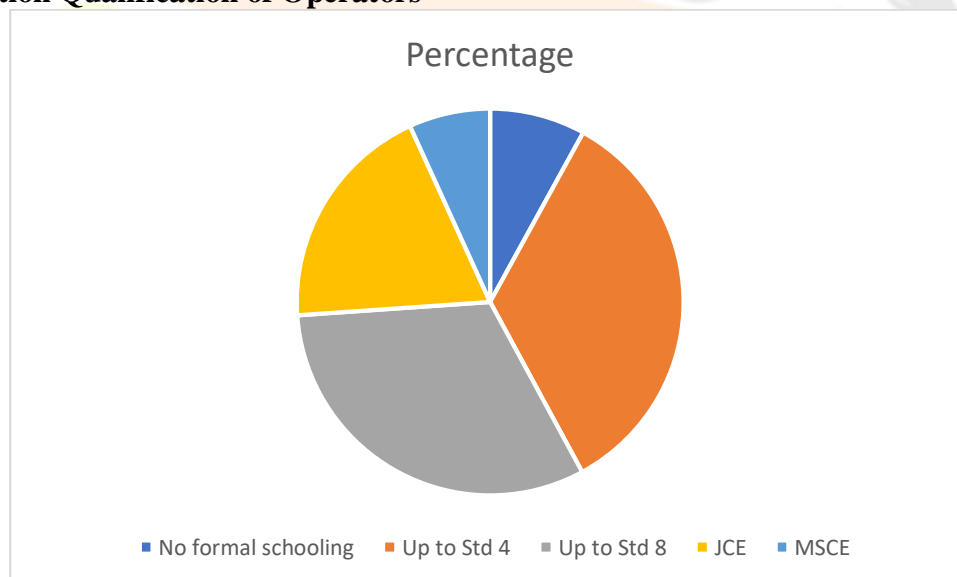
Table 3.1 Operators' Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
13-16	1	1.1
17-20	41	46.6
21-24	46	46
Total	88	100

Source: Field Work March 2023

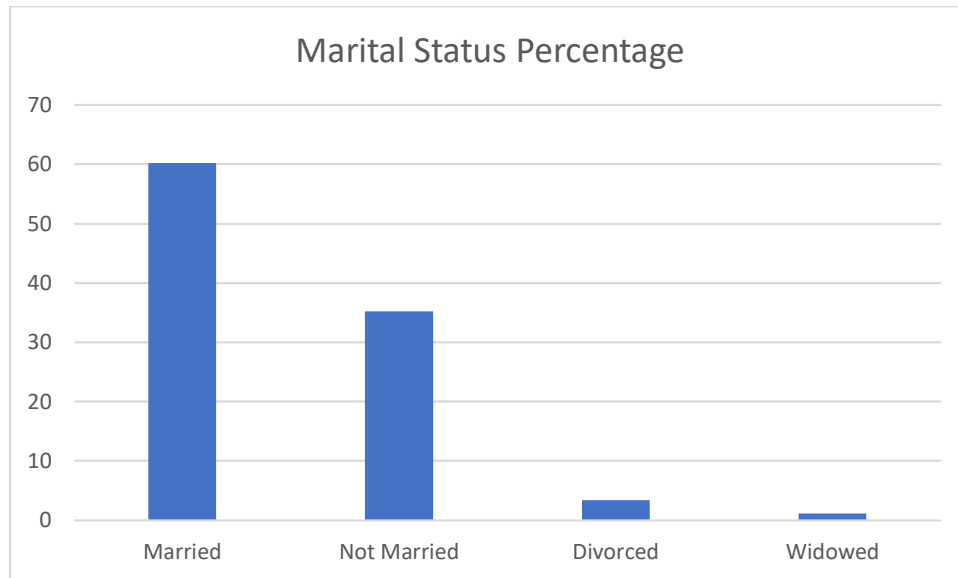
In terms of age categories, the survey reveals that most of the respondents (52.3%) fall within the 21-24 age category, 46% of the operators fall within the 17-20 age category and the 13-16 age category represents 1.1%. However, on the age of joining the Dampa business, the majority of the operators 73 (83%) joined the business within the 17-20 age category.

Figure 3.1 Education Qualification of Operators



Source: Field Work March 2023

The survey reveals that of all the operators interviewed 88, representing 100% do not go to school due to various reasons. The majority 48 (54.5%) mentioned a lack of school fees to enable them to attend secondary school. 27 representing 30.7% dropped out of school because they lost interest in schooling. 9 respondents (10.2%) dropped out because they wanted to start operating bicycles, while 4 respondents (4.5%) dropped out due to the long distance to the nearest school making it difficult for them to attend classes in good time. Looking at the level of education of the bicycle taxi operators, 7 respondents (8%) have never been to any formal school. The majority of 58 respondents (65.9%) only attempted primary education and did not proceed to the secondary level. 17 respondents (19.3%) reached the junior level of secondary education, while 6 respondents representing 6.8% reached the higher level of secondary education.

Figure 3.2 Marital Status

Source: Field Work March 2023

The study wanted to establish if the bicycle business is pushing the boys into early marriage hence, they were asked if they are married. The survey reveals that the majority of the respondents 53 (60.2%) were married, and 31 respondents representing 33.2% were not married. 3 representing 3.4% were divorced while 1 representing 1.1% was widowed. Considering the age of marriage, 39 (44.3%) got married within the age range of 17-20 category while 17 (19.3%) got marriage within the age range of 21-24 category. This indicates that money generated from the Dampa business is building their confidence to find a partner to settle down with.

3.1.2 Driving Forces to Start Operating Bicycle Taxi

On driving forces, the study examined the years in which the operators have been in the business, the amount of money made in a week, other motivating factors that drove them into the bicycle taxi business, and how their lives have changed since joining the Dampa business.

Table 3.2 Number of Years in the Bicycle Taxi Business

Years	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1	5	5.7
1-2	50	56.8
2-3	7	8.0
More than 3	26	29.5
Total	88	100

Source: Field Survey 2023.

Considering the number of years in the business, the majority of the Dampa operators 57 (64.8%) have been doing the business for a period of 1-3 years. 26 operators representing 29.5% have been in the business for a period of over 3 years while the remaining 5 who represent 5.7% have been in the business for a period of 1 year or less.

Table 3.3 Amount of Money Made in a Week

Amount in Kwacha	Frequency	Percentage
7000-8000	12	13.6
8000-9000	8	9.1
9000-10000	36	40.9
More than 10000	32	36.4
Total	88	100

Source: Field Work March 2023

In terms of income, the majority of operators 36 (40.9%) earn between 9,000 - 10,000 Malawi Kwacha within a week. 32 operators, representing 36.4% make more than 10,000 Malawi Kwacha within a week, while the remaining 18 (22.7%) of the operators earn between 7,000 – 9,000 Malawi Kwacha.

Table 3.4 Source of Motivation

Motivation	Frequency	Percentage
Raise funds for marriage	3	3.4
Make extra income	2	2.3
lack of schooling and employable skills to secure a job	41	46.6
As a form of employment	42	47.7
Total	88	100

Source: Field Work March 2023

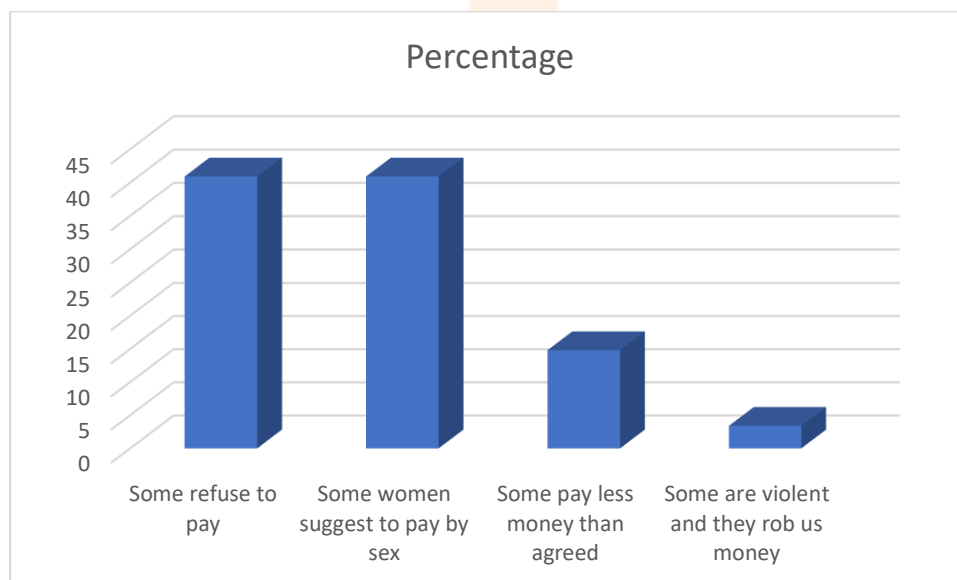
On motivation to start a bicycle business operation, operators 42 (47.7%) joined bicycle operation as a form of self-employment. 42 representing 46.6 % ventured into the bicycle business because they don't have any employable skills to enable them to secure a job. 3 (3.4%) operators joined the business to raise funds in preparation for marriage while 2 operators representing 2.3% wanted to make extra income for other household expenses.

The researcher also wanted to find out how the operators' lives have changed. Most of the operators 68 (77.3%) responded that money generated from the bicycle business has made their food secure as they can use the money to buy fertilizer and harvest more maize. 11 of them representing 12.5% managed to buy new bicycles. 3 (3.4%) built houses for their families, while 6 (6.8%) have now married.

3.2 Challenges Faced by Operators

The study wanted to establish challenges faced by the operators by looking at the operating time, passengers' behaviour, and challenges operators face in their daily operations.

In terms of operating time, the survey revealed that the majority 67 representing 76.1% operate their bicycle during the day from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, while 16 respondents representing 18.2% operate from 6:00 am to 12:00 midnight. 1 respondent (1.1%) operates from 12:00 noon to 6:00 pm and 1 person (1.1%) operates from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am.

Figure 3.3 Passenger Behavior

Source: Field Work March 2023

To determine the challenges being faced by the operators, the researcher assessed passenger behavior, the survey reveals that 36 operators (40.9%) sometimes pick up passengers who refuse to pay after being dropped at their destination. Another 36 (40.9%) said they get paid less amount than what was agreed at the beginning of the trip. 13 operators (14.8%) reveals that some women don't want to pay cash, instead they suggest paying in kind through sex, while the remaining 3 (3.4%) mentioned that they get robbed by some passenger on the way to their destination.

The operators were also asked to mention other challenges which are faced in their business: the majority 42 (47.7%) mentioned expensive spare parts. 16 representing 18.1% mentioned inconsiderate Sienta Taxi drivers who

treat them as nothing by pushing them away from the road and then causing accidents. 15 operators representing 17% said that there are too many operators in the business which create stiff competition amongst them, while 8 (9%) mentioned that they are grounded whenever they fall sick

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Introduction

The main objective of the study was to investigate the driving forces of male youth aged 14 to 24 years to venture into bicycle taxis and the challenges associated with the business. This chapter is divided into three main parts: the first one is to discuss the findings of the research questions, the second is to make recommendations and the last one is to suggest areas for further research.

4.2 Discussions of Findings

The research was based on three questions, as presented in the first chapter. The answers to these research questions will be presented below.

4.2.1 Operator's Demographic Characteristics

The findings reveal that youth including adolescents are involved in bicycle taxi operations, the majority of whom are in the age group of 17 to 20 years. This shows the domination of the 17-20 age categories, probably because they are energetic. They join the business at a very tender age, as early as 13 to 16 years of age. This means that they drop out of school in a primary and secondary school as revealed by the findings that most of them only managed to attend primary school, some dropping in standard 4 and others in standard 8. The findings have also revealed that a very small percentage of operators (25.3) have been to secondary school. Therefore, the majority of these operators did not finish their primary education as it does not require any qualification to get employed. The implication of this is that many young people are dropping out of school to venture into this business. If more and more boys drop out of school the country will suffer as more young people will be uneducated, thereby negatively affecting the country's efforts in human capital development and also the achievement of the sustainable development goal of "ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by 2030".

The research findings show that the majority of the operators (60.2%) are married though most of them are below the age of 20 (early marriage), against the legal marriage age of 18 (Ministry of Gender, 2018) suggesting that young people get married because they are exposed to money at a tender age which encourages them to search for a partner as they feel confident of supporting the wife and the family with the money realized from the business, this is in agreement with the assumptions made by the education office that owning a Dampa taxi is like a license to get married as they feel they are ready to support a family. Further exposure to money at a tender age will drive them into drug and alcohol substance abuse.

The findings have effectively discussed education qualification, the age at which they started bicycle operation, and their marital status to respond to the objective on the operator's demographic characteristics

4.2.2 Driving Forces to Start Operating Bicycle Taxi

Youth join the bicycle taxi business because of different reasons, as discussed above most of them did not finish primary school, meaning that they don't have any qualifications. Hence, they join the business as the only option for their livelihood as revealed by the study which shows that 46.6% of the youth joined the business as a form of employment. Local officials indicate that youth join Dampa business due to the unemployment problems, as the situation worsens, the unemployment rate is 21% (NSO, 2013) in Malawi. The research has also established that youth are pushed into the bicycle taxi business because they do not have schooling and employable skills to secure formal jobs (these two are discussed as two driving forces, however critically looking at them, one leads to another). When you do not have skills, you cannot be given any job, the alternative is to start any petty business. Views from Youth Leaders suggest that young people are driven into the bicycle taxi business because of poverty faced by their families hence they are forced to drop out of school and look for something to earn a living such as a bicycle taxi business.

Making money is another motivation that was raised by the operators as a driving force to join the bicycle taxi business. What differs is the purpose, the study established two main uses; the number one being operators wanting to raise money for family use or personal development just like any other business person. The second group wanted to raise money to prepare for marriage. The research established that operators make up to 11,000 Malawi kwacha within a week, meaning that within a month, one can make 44,000 Malawi kwacha. In a country where the majority of people (71%) live below the poverty line of USD 2.15 per day (World Bank, 2023), the 44,000 Malawi kwacha is very attractive to many young people to join the business for a better life. In addition, the researcher noted that the majority of the operator's (77.3%) lives have positively changed after joining the business. For example, they are food secure as they can use the money realized to buy fertilizer and harvest more maize. Some operators have managed to buy new bicycles and others have built houses, meaning that they make more money, enough to consume and surplus to save for developments. Government officials and youth leaders, pointed out one other interesting driving force for joining the Dampa business which is to raise money for school fees, they said some boys support themselves with money realized from the Dampa business, however, the researcher did not come across any Dampa operators who go to school.

Through discussion on the years in which the operators have been in the business, the amount of money made in a week, other motivating factors such as income and improved life that drove them into the bicycle taxi business, and how their lives have changed since joining the Dampa business, objective on driving forces has been effectively responded.

4.3 Challenges Faced by Operators

The research findings reveal several challenges faced by the operators. According to the responses by the operators, the first challenge is to do with means to ensure that they make more money, hence operators are forced to work more hours to maximize their earnings, operators who work more hours make more money, and they can make over 11,000 Malawi kwacha within a week. As they strive to make more money, they face challenges such as passengers refusing to pay, passengers who pay less money than the agreed amount and at night the operators are faced with female passengers who don't want to pay cash instead they suggest paying in kind through sex. The study established that some operators agree to sex, (in most cases without protection) this may eventually put operators' lives at risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections including HIV. For the operators who trade up to midnight, they meet drunk people and robbers pretending to be passengers who take advantage of the operators by harassing them and also robbing them of their hard-earned money.

The findings have also revealed challenges associated with the cost of maintaining their bicycles, with the rising cost of commodities, prices for bicycle spare parts and service fees have also risen, and these costs have eventually reduced their take-home amount. Most operators cited problems to do with space on the roads, more especially space given by fellow road users such as Sienta Taxi drivers who do not regard them as legitimate road users, they said this puts them at a very high risk of being involved in an accident. This was agreed upon by officials who considered Dampa as not being safe due to the operator's conduct like speeding and disregard of road rules and regulations.

The findings further established that there are many bicycle operators on the roads of Salima, according to the operators the increased number of operators upsurges the level of competition for passengers which stands as a very big challenge to them and sometimes they fight for parking space to maximize their passenger base. The number of operators is increasing because the business has proved to be less capital-demanding and paying off hence more young people are joining it as the only readily available form of employment. The findings also revealed that, just like any human being, operators sometimes feel sick rendering them weak and they fail to go to work, being self-employed and without enough savings, they heavily suffer as they do not have any alternative source of income to support their families.

On objective three which was looking at the challenges faced by operators, the findings discussed operating time, passenger behavior, and other challenges which emerged such as the high cost of spare parts, the behaviour of other road users like Sienta Taxi operators, stiff competition for passengers, sickness and high risk for accidents.

4.4 Suggestions and Recommendations

Following the review of literature and analysis of research results, which indicate that the bicycle taxi business is dominated by male youth who are driven into the business by many social issues including lack of schooling and employable skills to secure decent jobs, unemployment, and poverty. They join the bicycle taxi business in search of money to achieve their dreams of being food secure and building a house for their families. The following recommendations are proposed regarding the driving forces of youth to venture into the bicycle taxi business.

Firstly, the government through the Ministry of Education should develop a curriculum that is empowering to the learners so that when they drop out of school even at the primary level, they should be able to run a sustainable business that will enable them to live a comfortable life. Secondly, both government and development partners should design education programs to keep poor boys in school, these programs should be able to provide education support to boys covering school fees and other scholastic materials. Lastly, there is a need for mentorship programs for school-going boys to encourage them to go further with their studies as well as empower them with sexual reproductive health and life skills messages to prepare them socially

4.5 Areas for Further Research

Future studies should focus on perceptions of school-going boys on the many education support programs/projects which sideline them but only target girls. Another area should be on health risks associated with operating bicycle Taxis.

4.6 Conclusion

Dampa business in Salima is dominated by poor male youth aged between 17 and 24 years, who dropped out of school, most of them married at a tender age. They face numerous challenges in their operations including expensive spare parts, passengers refusing to pay, being underpaid, being robbed by violent passengers, and some women suggesting to pay by sex. Male youth are driven into the business by many social hitches such as school dropouts due to lack of school fees to continue with their education, lack of schooling and employable skills to secure decent jobs, and unemployment. Their objectives are to achieve their dreams of being food secured, to raise funds in preparation for marriage, and build a house for their family. The analysis is leading us to appreciate that the Dampa business is a form of informal employment for many uneducated young people in the district.

Damp business in Salima is dominated by male youth aged between 17 and 24 years, most of them are married and are driven into the business by many social issues such as school dropout due to lack of school fees to continue with their education, lack of schooling and employable skills to secure decent jobs and unemployment. They join the bicycle taxi business in search of money to achieve their dreams of being food secured and building a house for their families, others join the business because of poverty and also to raise funds in preparation for marriage.

4.7 References

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