

Contribution of the Motorcycle Taxi Profession to the Reduction of the Unemployment Rate and the Impact of this Profession on the Health of Riders in Tône Prefecture (Northern Togo)

Babénoun Lare^{a*}, Dayangnéwendé Edwige Nikiema^b, Hervé Kombieni^c

^aUniversité de Kara, BP 404 Kara, 00228, Togo

^bUniversité Joseph KI-ZERBO, Laboratoire d'études et recherche sur les milieux et territoires (LERMIT), 03BP 7021 Ouagadougou 03, 00226, Burkina Faso

^cUniversité d'Abomey-Calavi, BP 1049 Abomey-Calavi, 00229, Benin

^aEmail: babenounlare@yahoo.fr, ^bEmail: hedwigen@gmail.com, ^cEmail: hervekombieni@yhoo.fr

Abstract

The high rate of unemployment remains one of the major problems of sub-Saharan countries. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Economic and Demographic Studies (INSEED), the rate of unemployment in Togo was 28.6% in 2013 [1]. For that reason, young Togolese have undertaken the profession of motorcycle taxis to overcome unemployment's hardships. In the prefecture of Tône, young people are not spared. The objective of this article is to analyze the contribution of the motorcycle taxi rider's profession to the reduction of unemployment and its impact on the health of these riders. Using a mixed methodology approach (quantitative and qualitative), this study sampled 245 young people. Interviews were conducted with leaders of motorcycle taxi riders' unions and medical staff. The data collected is processed with the Csprou 7.4 software and maps made with the Arc GIS 3.2 software. The results show that 74.8% of young people engage in this profession in the area surveyed. More than 25% suffer from diseases such as respiratory infections, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, eye disease, discharge from the nose and nervousness. This profession remains a panacea in youth entrepreneurship.

Keywords: motorcycle; taxi; rider's health; youth unemployment; entrepreneurship; Tône prefecture.

* Corresponding author.

1. Introduction

Today, youth employment is a major challenge for the world in general and for Togo in particular. According to the results of the fourth General Census of Population and Housing [2], 60% of Togolese are under 25 years old and 42% under 15 years old. The implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP), the socio-political crisis that Togo experienced during the 1990s coupled with the devaluation of the CFA Franc in 1994 had consequences on the labor market for these young people. The labor market is the sector that has suffered the most from the political, social and economic crises that Togo has experienced since the 1990s. The education system puts out or graduates yearly many young people to whom the country is unable to offer job opportunities, leading to an increase in the number of unemployed graduates. The Structural Adjustment Programs have led to job cuts, redundancies and led the State to freeze the recruitment of graduates in the public administration [3]. Young people between the ages of 15 and 34 are the most important generation today. They aspire to get decent work. Unfortunately, the Togolese education system is increasingly criticized and the training provided there does not respond to the Togolese labor market. They are more oriented towards the award of diplomas than towards practical qualifying training allowing access to the labor market and which can offer a lot of opportunities of integration. As a result, young people with degrees from various public and private universities and the deflated from enterprises and companies that have found themselves jobless, have joined the informal sector and engaged in various activities including that of motorcycle taxi riding as an alternative to their precarious situation. It is to compensate for this lack of employment that the system of movement for motorcycle taxis was set up [4]. In addition to these unemployed young people, migrants from small towns and villages as well as from countries in the sub-region increase the number of jobseekers every year. This phenomenon of migration has an effect on the health of the migrants. According to [5], the period around the tenth year after their arrival is crucial for their mental health. These different reasons have led to the scarcity of employment which results in an imbalance between the supply of employment which is much lower than an increasingly growing demand. According to data from the [1] survey, underemployment affects 22.76% of the population. The motorcycle taxi business that has invaded Togo's cities has proven to be a key branch of the informal sector to deal with unemployment. Motorcycle taxis, commonly known as "Zémidjan" or "Zed", facilitate urban travel on a daily basis and keep cities awake by ensuring the mobility of those whose professional or leisure activities take place in the middle of the night [4]. In February 2021, the number of motorcycle taxi riders in Togo was estimated at 332,745 with a total of 400 riders in Dapaong. Faced with this magnitude that the phenomenon has taken in Dapaong, we ask ourselves the following question: What is the contribution of the motorcycle taxi profession to the reduction of the unemployment rate and what is the impact of this profession on the health of these drivers in the prefecture of Tône?

2. Study site, Methods and materials

To achieve the set objective, a data collection methodology was adopted: documentation, primary data collection and observations.

2.1. Study site

Dapaong is the capital town of the prefecture of Tône, one of the 5 districts (prefectures) in the Savannah region of northern Togo. It covers an area of 5500 km² and is situated about 630 km from Lomé [6]. Geographically, the city, Dapaong is between 10°51 and 10°44.1 north latitude and between 0°12 and 0° 27.4 east longitudes. It is located in the prefecture of Tône which is bounded to the northwest by the prefecture of Cinkassé, to the northeast by Burkina Faso to the south by the prefecture of Tandjoaré, to the east by the prefecture of Kpendjal-west and to the west by Ghana.

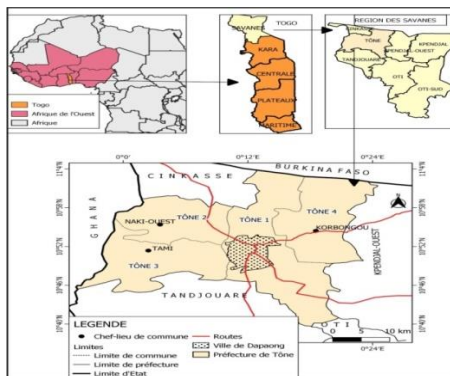


Figure 1: Location map of Dapaong City.

Source: DGSCN, 2010; map updated by SAMBIANI M, 2021

Map n°1 locates the city of Dapaong chosen for its massive flows of unemployed youth. Between 2020 and 2021, there were more than 400 young motorcycle taxi riders.

2.2. Target population of the study

For this study, secondary and primary data sources were used. This work was based on a methodological approach based on literature review and data collection. For the documentary research, the Regional Management of Planning and Development Direction, the Chamber of Trades, and the research on the Internet were of great help. Other books related to the subject of study such as doctoral dissertations were also consulted. This documentation made it possible to better define the outlines of the topic and to choose, in a judicious way, the key concepts in order to better understand the issue developed. The primary data are those from field surveys consisting of observations, questionnaire administration and interviews. An observation grid has been developed. This phase made it possible to observe the state of health of motorcycle taxi riders, the behaviors of the nursing staff vis-à-vis these motorcycle taxi riders, the time they take before being received, the welcome granted to them. To obtain the qualitative data, semi-direct interviews that provided detailed and in-depth information on the research topic were conducted with seven health care professionals in different departments of the center and with resource persons from the institutions involved. The considering of health workers helped to provide information on the degree of attendance at health centers by these riders. The interviews were supplemented by questionnaires. These questionnaires were developed and then sent to young riders.

The methodological approach adopted for this analysis is based on the following aspects: the documentary

approach, the non-participant observation, the semi-directive interview and the questionnaire survey. The semi-structured interviews were carried out using a guide with a sample of 245 motorcycle taxi riders selected at random in the most popular motorcycle taxi stations (former Customs, BTD crossroads, carnival crossroads, Worougou station, Tantigou Pediatrics). The interviews focused on the actions and motivations of motorcycle taxi riders because only the meanings given by the actors to their actions allow the researcher to analyze and understand them. Furthermore, the observation was carried out to identify the various activities related to that of Zémidjan.

2.3. Method of processing the data collected

Once the data has been collected, it is processed using the appropriate software. The quantitative data was entered into the Csp7.4 software and then transferred to the SPSS 26.0 software for processing and analysis.

Qualitative data was processed with the technique of content analysis. They have been processed in the Nudist 1.71 software for an in-depth analysis based on the strong ideas from the interviews that are considered important. The main tables and graphs of the study were produced in Excel. Maps were made from the Arc GIS 3.2a software.

3. Results

The results focus on the contribution of the motorcycle taxi profession, which has become a provider of employment for young people and its impact on their health.

3.1. Motorcycle taxis: new strategies for access to employment

The motorcycle taxi business is one of the strategies adopted by young people in the field of study in order to have access to employment. This profession provides financial coverage for unemployed young people as well as for their families. The activity of riding a motorcycle taxi involves two groups of actors. There is the first group of actors who structure the motorcycle business and secondly, the group of the riders who are provided or supplied with the motorcycles. Buying a motorcycle and signing a contract with a motorcycle taxi rider to work and pay double the price of the motorcycle, is a beneficial enterprise that many people, including civil servants and merchants, practice to improve their yearly or monthly income and wealth. The sector is characterized by 57% of motorcycle taxi riders who have acquired their motorcycle on the basis of the contract.

3.2. Methods of access to motorcycle taxis

Access to the motorcycle taxi trade depends on the conditions under which the acquisition of the motorcycle was made. About 94% of respondents reveal that before riding a motorcycle, you must have a driving licence. Actually, only 43% have passed the motorcycle taxi driving licence. The 38% of motorcycle taxi riders do not consider this condition to be mandatory for practice. Several sources of motorcycle acquisition allow young people to have a motorcycle: About 34% have acquired the motorcycle by their own fund and 42% have taken out a loan from a microfinance institution, 21% have been paid for the motorcycle and will repay double the

cost price (Work-and-pay); 3.2% rent it to work daily (a system called “spare”).

The acquisition of a motorcycle in relation to the income of the respondents being unemployed is not easy. A look at the evolution of poverty shows that between 2015 and 2020, poverty increased by 5.8% in the prefecture of Tône unlike in the other prefectures. Estimated at 34.3% in 2015 in the Savannah Region, poverty was at 28.5% in 2020 [1]. This situation of poverty does not allow young graduates to meet their daily needs. Owing to these conditions, the young people readily engaged in the profession of motorcycle taxi. They acquire the different motorcycles according to the following selling prices (Table n°1).

Table1: Motorcycle brands and the cost prices.

Brands	Model	Selling price in FCFA	Cost Price in FCFA
SANILI	TS125-6	420 000	500 000
	TS100-6T	475 000	700 000
SANYA	SY125-8	420 000	700 000
	SY125-10	475 000	437 000
APSONIC	AP125-A	420 000	437 000
	AP125-8	475 000	650 000
HAOJUE	HJ125-8N	495 000	542 000
	HJ125-8EX	450 000	600 000
RICHESSSE		500 000	700 000

Source: Field Surveys, November, 2020

According to the data in the table, the selling prices of motorcycles are between 420,000 CFA francs and 500,000 CFA francs. The precarious situation of many young graduates does not allow them to find this amount to acquire a new motorcycle. For this reason, supporting strategies are put in place by motorcycle taxi riders to circumvent these financial constraints. Becoming a motorcycle taxi rider in Dapaong involves the acquisition of motorcycles sometimes thanks to the solidarity organization of riders.

3.3. The motorcycle taxi profession: a sector providing employment for young graduates

Age is an important factor in the motorcycle cab business. Surveys reveal that young people practice the motorcycle cab profession much more than older people. Thus, drivers aged 15 to 29 years represent 54.6% against 44.4% for adults from 30 to 49 years and 4.2% for drivers over 50 years. Generally, older people are in this occupation because of their age. Young people, on the other hand, are the best drivers of motorcycle cabs. The proportion of young people in this profession is even greater in urban areas, especially because of the predominantly young rural exodus in search of employment.

The motorcycle taxi riding sector, although dangerous for being the cause of several traffic accidents, is an area that provides employment for young people. According to the statistics of the study report conducted by the COSTT, riders are estimated at 18,547 in the savannah region and 400 in the city of Dapaong. It appears that the motorcycle taxi activity is for most graduates a transitional activity that they hope to give up as soon as they find

a better job that corresponds or not with their profile. The motorcycle taxi profession is one of the strategies adopted by young people to have access to employment. The desire to contribute to reducing this situation of poverty in the field of school studies has led to the use of motorcycles as a means of transport. These strategies are put in place by the unemployed in order to circumvent these financial constraints. Motorcycle taxi riders are setting up self-help methods such as tontine that allow young people to have funds for the acquisition of motorcycles. This allows us to have an idea about the needs of motorcycle taxi riders (Table n°2).

Table 2: Identity of motorcycle taxi riders according to their needs.

Staff	Needs	Percentage
8	Repair	3,26%
201	Newcomer	82,04%
30	Renewal	12,24%
6	Technical visit	2,44 %
245	4 needs	100,0%

Source: Based on fieldwork, February 2021

Table 2 shows the number of motorcycle taxi riders and their needs. For the least important class, it was registered 6 people out of 245 who need technical visit. This gives 2.44%. The second largest class makes up to a number of 201 people who are newcomers. This gives 82.04%.

3.3.1. The organization of the motorcycle taxi sector and the value of the activity

Motorcycle taxi riders in the field of studies are organized in associations and their operation is modeled on that of associations: the motorcycle taxi riders’ trade unions. The first infrastructure of motorcycle taxi riders called “Regroupement des Taxi-Mottos” (RETAMO) was created in 1993. It was a simple association that aroused little interest among riders. It gave way in January 1994 to the first motorcycle taxi union called “Union Syndicale des Conducteurs de Taxi Moto du Togo” (USYNCTAT). The sector counts several trade union organizations which are gathered under the umbrella group of The Trade Union Organizations of Motorcycle Taxis of Togo (COSTT) and include decision-making bodies, monitoring and control bodies of passenger satisfaction. They have a General Assembly, a Board of Directors, a Control Committee and an Executive Board. The General Assembly, which is composed of all the members, is the decision-making body from which the Board of Directors comes, which gives guidance to the members for the proper functioning of the trade union organizations. The Executive Directorate is headed by a President who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the body. Contributions are paid in one lump sum each year. Collecting agents and managers are responsible for collecting contributions. Contributions are paid into accounts opened in microfinance institutions.

3.3.2. The functioning of the motorcycle taxi profession

To be able to honor their commitments, motorcycle taxi riders work under multiple contracts. More than 55% work on a work-and-pay contract. First, the owner buys a motorcycle and signs a contract with a motorcycle taxi

rider to work and pay double the purchase price of the motorcycle. It is a beneficial activity to improve the incomes of the poorest people. The profession is mainly based on this contractual system because 75% of the motorcycle taxi riders surveyed acquired their motorcycle on the basis of the contract. On this contract, the rider pays at the end of the day to his owner a sum of 2,000 F CFA and this for 6 days out of 7 of the weeks until the end of the contract. For example, a Sanya motorcycle that costs 420,000 CFA francs to purchase with registration and an insurance policy, returns to the new buyer at 700,000 CFA francs repayable for a maximum of one year. This produces a profit to the owner to have a return of at least 100% on the amount invested. This type of contract with the motorcycle taxi rider dedicates to the sector a structural organization between the owners (motorcycle buyers) and the taxi riders. Indeed, this creates an obligation to reimburse the purchasers. The second way of operation of the sector is the daily rental of motorcycle. The motorcycle taxi rider borrows the motorcycle from the motorcycle taxi owners to work. Per day, he must pay a sum of 2,000 F CFA also to the owner but also make sure to fill the tank of the motorcycle with fuel before returning it. This system does not require any special arrangements between the owner and the tenant of the motorcycle.

3.4. The motorcycle taxi profession: a sector of business creation

This activity has allowed the creation of other activities ranging from assembly to repair of motorcycles through the sale of spare parts and accessories. For the assembly and sale of motorcycles, the companies present in Cinkassé, sell Sanya, Haojue brand motorcycles and the Sanili Company sells Apsonic motorcycles. Beyond these main activities mentioned, these companies also have structures for the overhaul, maintenance and repair of motorcycles. Other actors are also involved in the sale of motorcycles that are used to exercise the profession; these are individuals who expose for sale used or second-hand motorcycles along the roads. The presence of motorcycle taxis has brought added value to the economy with facilities of roadside motorcycle repair and maintenance shops in Dapaong by young people trained as two-wheeled mechanics and vulcanizers. According to the two-wheeled motorcycle mechanics queried during the data collection, motorcycle taxi riders make up the most important part of their clientele. With regard to the sale of motorcycle spare parts, there are several shops located in the city of Dapaong that employ up to three (03) or four (04) people (Table 2).

Table 3: Estimated income in CFA francs and number of persons according to the activities practiced.

Actors	Seller/ company	Occasional seller	Repair/ Assembler	Vulcanizer
Daily wages	4000	2500	2500	1500
Monthly salary	720. 000	450 000	450 000	270 000
Average number of persons employed	5	4	5	3

Source: Field survey, August 2021

Table 2 shows the different daily and monthly earnings and the number of people employed in the different activities practiced. These activities related to the motorcycle taxi profession are opportunities for young people to integrate into society, receive a salary and improve their living conditions. From the data in this table, the average monthly income equals the double or even the triple of the Guaranteed Inter-Professional Monthly

Salary (SMIG) which is set at 35,000 CFA francs.

3.5. The profession of motorcycle cab, multiple benefits to users

The advantage of motorcycle cabs allows, not only to enroll customers, but also, to facilitate them to bypass traffic jams, to easily slip between the cars sometimes neglecting the traffic rules in order to save time. However, that the collective cabs ensure the long distances whose frequencies of service are more are more random, motorcycle cabs on the other hand are intermediate and proximity modes that generally which generally offer a high frequency of service over short and medium distances.

3.6. Impact of the motorcycle taxi profession on the health of riders

The motorcycle taxi profession has allowed young people to have a temporary source of income. Through this income-generating activity, unemployed young graduates ensure their daily needs since they participate in the monthly and annual contributions of the tontines and manage to satisfy the needs of their families. If motorcycle taxis cover 80% of transport needs, they cause environmental and health problems, with air pollution, especially in Dapaong-city where it is more practiced. The motorcycle taxi profession is a risky one for the health of riders and for the population, because of the gases that escape from motorcycles all day long. These gases cause diseases from substances such as lead in fuels and lubricants used in engines. These include respiratory infections (47%), cardiovascular diseases (10%), cancer (7%), eye diseases, discharge from the nose and nervousness (32%) and 4% have other infections. In Dapaong, about 6 out of 10 riders acknowledge that their motorcycles emit a lot of smoke; 37% add that the machines in circulation also make a lot of noise. Riders are exposed to low back pain risks, especially riders who lift heavy loads. Exposure to psychosocial risks is reported among motorcycle taxi riders. They are subject to a risk of chronic stress that leads to traffic accidents or brain accidents. Sometimes they indulge in smoking; fatigue and sleep disturbances (insomnia) are also reported due to taking a medicine called 'tramadol'. This pollution, affecting their state of health, leads to a slowdown in the life expectancy or life span.

In addition, the motorcycle cab drivers suffer from sexual weakness, eye problems, constipation and typhoid fever. from eating in the street, these drivers suffer from constipation and typhoid fever. according to surveys, motorcycle cab drivers have other ailments such as neck pain, herniated discs and joint pain in the shoulders, knees and ankles, as well as numbness in the legs due to the vibrations of the motorcycles.

4. Discussion

The social phenomenon discussed here was analyzed in the light of the theoretical model of resilience. In his theoretical perspective, [7] considers resilience as an intrinsic quality of the individual, which allows him to overcome his suffering, to learn from his unhappy experiences to develop strategies for his development and well-being. Resilience can be seen as a dynamic process involving positive adaptation in the face of significant

adversity, or as a capacity for successful integration into society despite the serious risks of a negative outcome [8]. In other words, for [9], resilience is the "capacity of a person or a group to develop well, to continue to project themselves into the future despite destabilizing events, difficult living conditions, or severe trauma". This theoretical model allows us to understand the choice of the graduates to invest in the profession of motorcycle taxi driving. The aim is for them to seize the opportunity that this activity offers them in order to escape the precariousness of unemployment. In doing so, they increase their autonomy and their power to change their living conditions. The theoretical framework of this research focuses on the resilience of young graduates. Empowerment, sometimes considered as a mere concept and sometimes as a theory, is approached here as a theoretical model. It is an action whose goal is to increase the capacity of individuals, communities and actors to modify the historicity of their society or their destiny. According to [10], contrary to the results of other studies, it is observed here that, increasingly, the level of education of motorcycle cab drivers is increasing and many young university graduates are entering this activity, which is open to all categories regardless of professional qualification. And this in the logic of solving existential problems.

Several researchers have addressed the problem of motorcycle taxi trade in transport as an opportunity for young people to start their professional integration and, therefore, to reduce unemployment. They came to conclusions that are similar to those of the present research. Indeed, the results of this study coincide with those of [11] who show that young people embrace this profession of motorcycle taxi simply because it allows them to get out of their status of unemployed and to be able to live from day to day waiting for a better tomorrow. For young graduates, this profession is partly a strategy for survival and exit from unemployment even if it cannot guarantee a certain future. [12] finds that in 2003, this activity represented about 30,000 jobs offered by the informal sector to young people, which confirms the results of this research according to which the motorcycle taxi business has experienced a meteoric rise because of the conditions of access which are not very difficult. With the mechanism of contracting and solidarity set up by the riders, many young people acquire motorcycles and embark on the profession of motorcycle taxi rider. According to the results of [13], confirmed by the interviewees, there are three ways to have access to a motorcycle: It is this ability that [14] refers to as entrepreneurial resilience. Similarly, in his work on motorcycle taxi riders, [15] concludes that this profession, which has become part of the activities of the informal sector, has become a provider of jobs to solve the problem of unemployment and survival of young graduates. [16] find that it is a social innovation because the associations of motorcycle taxi riders respond to a quotient need. But for [17] the income from the motorcycle cab business is insufficient to cover the related risks. Thus, this profession of motorcycle cab, constitutes on the other hand a danger for the environment", recognizes [18]. The study conducted by the Togolese Society for Development Studies in Africa [19], reveals that most motorcycles used as taxis are used machines imported from the West, that the use of adulterated gasoline and the non-compliance with the lubricant mixing rate for their engines, are the cause of significant air pollution. This has negative consequences on the health of riders. According to [20] who quotes a Beninese consultant [21] "the city of Cotonou is the most polluted in the West African sub-region". The city center is covered with a cloud of smoke most of the day, especially during rush hours. [22], also recognizes the importance of the motorcycle taxi today as a means of transport, but he states: "We cannot remain insensitive to this problem of air pollution." Several studies have shown that motorcycle taxi riders are exposed to permanent inhalation of urban pollution components and car traffic exhaust [23]. As

pointed out [5] another mental health index is suicide and it is generally lower among migrant groups than in the host society. As underlined by [5] another health indicator is the suicide and common among the motorcycle taxi drivers.

5. Conclusion

This study showed the absorption of unemployment among young graduates by the motorcycle taxi profession. This profession of *motorcycle* taxi rider is a solution to the problem of youth unemployment because it absorbs young graduates and non-graduates, as it does also with the many related activities that have been created at the level of the sector. It should be noted that the motorcycle taxi profession is a solution to the mobility problem and makes it possible to open up the peripheries or outskirts of towns that cannot be accessed easily with the usual four-wheel taxis because of the degraded state of the roads. However, it impacts the health of riders causing respiratory infections, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, eye diseases, nose discharge and nervousness. Bearing this in mind, it is imperative that measures be considered to ensure that the offer of health services reaches the entire community of motorcycle taxi riders by setting up health insurance companies throughout the area covered by this study to facilitate their membership and respond to the many health care requests of these motorcycle taxi riders.

6. Previous Scholarship on the subject

Researchers have debated a lot about the motorcycle taxi profession and its impact on the health of riders. The profession of motorcycle taxis is one of the strategies adopted by the youth in the study area to access employment. Considered to be a way to partially solve the problem of unemployment, this profession has consequences on the health of riders. Several studies have shown that motorcycle taxi riders are continuously exposed to inhalation of components of urban pollution and exhaust gases from traffic automobile exhaust pipes [23]. Although motorcycle taxis meet up to 80% of transport needs, they cause environmental and health problems, including air pollution, especially in the town of Dapaong where it is more popular. The job of motorcycle is a health hazard for the riders and the population because of the gases that escape from motorcycles all day long.

7. Scope

It should be noted that the motorcycle taxi business is a solution to the problem of mobility and makes accessible the outskirts that cannot be reached by four-wheel taxis due to bad roads. However, this transport means impacts the health of riders causing respiratory infections, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, eye diseases, runny nose and nervousness.

8. Study Originality

This study shows the importance of motorcycle taxis in transportation and the opening up of environments in the town of Dapaong. However, this profession affects the health of riders through respiratory infections, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, eye diseases, runny nose and nervousness about their health condition. The

relevance of this theme is measured in relation to the strategies these riders devise to take charge of their health in a context of poverty.

The motorcycle taxi business helps to improve the living conditions of the youth and reduce unemployment rates.

9. The limits or constraints of the motorcycle cab business

- We can find unprofessional drivers who do not have a strong knowledge of the profession
- There is a lack of quality service due to a lack of equipment
- In times of economic moroseness, customers are unable to pay the real cost of their trip.
- The inability of drivers to raise the deposit required by the motorcycle owner
- The growing insecurity that these drivers face prevents them from working until late at night.
- Health problems of drivers

10. Conflicts of interest

None

11. Author contribution

Babénoun Laré designed the questionnaire, collected data and supervised the collection of information, analyzed the data and wrote the article.

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12. Highlights

(“< ou = 85 words”/Mandatory for Health& Place p8/Optional but encouraged for SSM Population, p7)

- Motorcycle taxi riders are young graduates and school dropout youth
- Motorcycle taxi profession reduces the number of unemployed
- Wealth is increased and jobs are created related to motorcycle taxis
- Respiratory infections affect some of the riders

- Cater for rider's well-being to ensure continuity

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