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DEBUNKING POPULAR  
NARRATIVES ABOUT  
ADAIDAITA-SAHU  
RIDERS: THE KANO  
EXPERIENCE



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## **DEBUNKING POPULAR NARRATIVES ABOUT *ADAIDAITA-SAHU* RIDERS: THE KANO EXPERIENCE**

### **Abstract**

Despite that tricycle (*Adaidaita-Sahu*) riders are major players in transportation business in Kano, amazingly, there exist few or no studies on the socio-economic characteristics and the attendant everyday life experiences of *adaidaita-sahu* riders against the backdrop of popular narratives in Kano metropolis. This paper focuses is on the everyday life and expectations of *adaidaita-sahu* riders as they carry out their daily business within Kano metropolis. In spite of popular narratives that portrays *adaidaita-sahu* riders generally as people of low life with criminal tendencies in Kano, a cursory look into this problematic provide counter-narratives to this perceptions.

**Key words:** Transport, Tricycle, *Adaidaita-sahu*, Kano metropolis, *achaba*

### **Introduction**

The genealogy of tricycle as means of commercial transportation in Nigeria can be traced to its introduction in Lagos by the Brigadier

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General Buba Marwa led military government from 1996 to 1999 (Mgbemena, 2013). In 2004, tricycle as means of public transportation was introduced in Kano as an offshoot of one of Shekarau's administration programme tagged "*Adaidaita-sahu*<sup>3</sup>." The programme was geared towards re-orientation of the people of the state in a bid to foster their well-being. The programme aligns with the implementation of Sharia in the state which frown at indecencies, most importantly, women immoral use of motorbike-taxi (*Achaba*) – riding of motorbike-taxi with men (Shehu, n.d.). Therefore, it is not surprising that commercial tricycles in Kano assumed the name "*adaidaita-sahu*."

But the main factor that heightened the proliferation of tricycle as means of commercial transportation in Nigeria as of today is the ban of motorbikes as means of commercial transportation in several cities in the country, Kano metropolis inclusive. The ban in Kano metropolis was necessitated due to perceived threat to security of lives and property posed by the commercial motorbike (*Achaba*) operators in 2012 (Madugu, 2017). In the wake of the ban, the disengaged workforce of *achaba* riders moved into *adaidaita-sahu* transportation business as an alternative and veritable source of livelihood.

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<sup>3</sup> *Adaidaita-sahu* literally means conforming to the right path.



1: Typical Adaidaita-Sahu in Kano Metropolis  
2: Busy Taludu junction in kano Metropolis

However, the commonly associated essence of occupation and transport that resulted in the popularity of the tricycle in most cities in Nigeria is fast becoming tainted with perceived multifaceted problems of economic and social malaise – kidnapping, reckless driving, theft, political assassination, Boko Haram activities amongst others – posed by commercial tricycle riders (Bamidele, 2016).

The focus of this paper is on the social, economic, everyday life and expectations of tricycle (*Adaidaita-Sahu*) riders that carry out their daily business within Kano metropolis. This paper results from a one-day fieldwork conducted within Kano metropolis. It explores the associated socio-economic characteristics of *adaidaita-sahu* riders, forms of ownership and its implication, and consequent expectations from their everyday life experiences<sup>4</sup>.

The paper looks at the associated socio-economic characteristics of *adaidaita-sahu* riders' in Kano metropolis within the context of their everyday life experiences, and further attempts to provide counter narratives to the underline popular perceptions and beliefs. The conclusion reviews the salient contributions of this paper and highlight the myths associated with *adaidaita-sahu* operations in Kano metropolis.

### **Man Must Eat!**

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<sup>4</sup> Focus group discussion was conducted because we met a gathering of *adaidaita-sahu* riders who were teeming to be interviewed collectively at a popular *shayi* (tea) joint in Kofar Mata; Informal interviews was conducted with *adaidaita-sahu riders* on the move while going about their daily business activities; In-depth interviews was conducted with riders who granted us audience to have deeper insights to the everyday life of *adaidaita-sahu* riders in Kano metropolis; and observation was conducted at *shayi* joints to examine riders interaction in their natural habitat

As at 2014, about 27,000 *adaidaita-sahu* were recorded to be duly registered with the Kano Amalgamated Tricycle Association (KATA) (Madugu, 2017). This is to say that *adaidaita-sahu* provide means of livelihood for a number of teeming population. Madugu (2017) views the proliferation of *adaidaita-sahu* as means of intra-city transport in Kano metropolis stem from the ban of *achaba* on the one hand, and lifting of embargo on mixing men and women in the same tricycle on the other hand, during Governor Musa Kwankwaso administration.

I started riding *achaba* at the age of 15 years but later became a bus conductor and afterwards continued riding *achaba* again before its ban by the Malam Ibrahim Shekarau led administration in 2012. The ban made most *achaba* riders like me to switch to *adaidaita-sahu* business so that we will be able to financially stable.

(FGD/Male/24 years/2018)

This standpoint was further corroborated by all the members of the focus group discussion. All of them were formerly *achaba* riders before taking up *adaidaita-sahu* business after the ban of commercial *achaba* business by the government.

Observations from going round the metropolis and interview responses indicates that virtually all *adaidaita-sahu* riders are males. This gender bias can be said to have socio-religious undertone, unlike in other metropolitan cities like Ibadan and Lagos where women are found engaging in tricycle riding business. As depicted in a research by Ipingbemi and Adebayo (2016), three out of every four tricycle rider in Ibadan is between 18-34 years of age. The same age structure is replicated in the *adaidaita-sahu* riders' age

composition with three distinct categories – 18-34 years (youth), 35-49 (middle) and 50 and above regarded as the old generation riders. The youth category also dominated the informal transport business in Kano metropolis. This is further similar to findings in Abia and Sri Lanka (Kumarage, Bandara, & munasinghe, 2010; Nwaogbe, Ibe, & Ukaegbu, 2012).

Furthermore, it is observed that the age category, category of passengers and choice of business route to a large extent determine the way an *adaidaita-sahu* is decorated. Youthful passengers prefer riding in *adaidaita-sahu* with colourful decorations and other aesthetics, and these types of *adaidaita-sahu* are found within the core of Kano metropolis like Kofar Nassarawa. In *adaidaita-sahu* business, decoration serve the purpose of commercials to attracting more patronage from commuters within the metropolis. On the other hand, the old category are usually found in the periphery of the city like market areas, Sabon gari, Yankaba, and other Market places in Kano. For this category, *adaidaita-sahu* decorations is not of utmost importance for two main reasons; first, unlike in the city core where we have more *adaidaita-sahu* than available passengers, the reverse is the case at the periphery.





3: Typical interior of a young rider's adaidaita-sahu  
4: Typical interior of an old rider's adaidaita-sahu

Therefore, passengers are rather concerned with their mobility rather than aesthetics; second, the deplorable state the road infrastructures at the periphery does not encourage them to decorate their *adaidaita-sahu*. According to a 56 year old *adaidaita-sahu* rider;

I am old and don't need to any form of decorations to carry on with my business. Most times I work within Sabon gari and the repairs to *adaidaita-sahu* due to bad roads are enough for me to think about than troubling myself over decorations. My customers only want to get to where they are going and not what my tricycle look like.

(IDI/Male/56 years/Kano/2018)

Most of the *adaidaita-sahu* riders have one form of formal education – Qur'anic School "*Makarantar Allo*" and Conventional School "*Makarantar Boko*". Some of them engaged in *adaidaita-sahu* business before completion of their formal education, while some of them did after completion of either their secondary or tertiary education. The consensus was that rather than stay jobless, they prefer moving into the business of tricycle. According to Abdulsalam Ibrahim, a 25 year old respondent from Kaduna who did not mind to be identified;

I have no choice than to start working than to go into riding *achaba* in Kaduna where I hailed from before I could complete my secondary education so that I can fend for myself and my younger ones. My father died before I could finish my secondary education and my mother does not make enough to cater for our needs. After completing my education, I moved down to Kano and got involved in *adaidaita-sahu* riding business.

This finding is against the general belief that *adaidaita-sahu* riders are people of low life and uneducated. Engagement in *adaidaita-*

*sahu* business is economic driven due to high rate of unemployment rather than level of education. For instance, in the words of a rider interviewed during a ride along;

..... I have a diploma degree from Aminu Kano School of Islamic and Legal Studies. I have to engage in this business when I graduated and found out that there is no job out there for me.

(Informal Interview/Male/28 years/Kano/2018)

*Adaidaita-sahu* riders are basically citizens that are merely trying to eke out a decent living for themselves in the face of all adversities.

### **Is it my Own?**

From the interviews with *adaidaita-sahu* riders, it was further observed that there exists three (3) main form of ownership *adaidaita-sahu* in Kano metropolis; outright purchase, hire purchase and balance<sup>5</sup>. The focus group interview the team conducted with a 5-man *adaidaita-sahu* riders first drew our attention to the categories and structure of ownership;

I started with balance method where I remit #2,000 per day to the owner of the *adaidaita-sahu*, but after two years, I signed in for the hire purchase plan where I pay a sum #2,500 daily for a period of eighteen (18) months before the *adaidaita-sahu*

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<sup>5</sup> Outright purchase – The owner pays the retail price at once and ownership is immediate; Hire purchase – Payments made in regular instalments over a period of time to offset set price while working with the *adaidaita-sahu* to ensure payment, after which assumption of ownership is effected; Balance – this is when *adaidaita-sahu* rider pays a stipulated amount daily/weekly as agreed, but not to offset machine price, and ownership is never assumed by the rider.

became mine. After that I sold it for #400,000 and invested the proceeds while I take up another hire purchase now which is just three (3) months old.

(FGD/Male/25 years/2018)

Further interactions with a number of *adaidaita-sahu* riders in Kano metropolis also lend credence to this. According to the data collected in Kano metropolis, most of the *adaidaita-sahu* riders are into hire purchase arrangements because of its flexibility and its advantage of gaining ownership of the tricycle after completing its payment. However, findings reveal to us that rather than continuously utilizing the same tricycle, the *adaidaita-sahu* riders prefer to sell it off and employ the money for other purposes because they have other hopes and aspirations apart from continuously engaging in *adaidaita-sahu* riding.

### **Not a Gloomy Future at all**

The tricycle rider popularly known in Kano as *adaidata-sahu* rider is seen by many as an ordinary rider who has no hope and aspiration in future. Some even go to the extent of seen them as nuisance because of the belief that are they are rough, rugged and by extension a menace to the public. While this may be true to some extent, there are also some *adaidaita-sahu* riders that are so determined and focused to the point that they set out time-bound specific goals to be achieved which is contrary to the general perception of *adaidaita-sahu* riders.

According to an *adaidaita-sahu* rider in Kano metropolis during an interview, he said

This is the third tricycle I am riding in Kano which is also under the hire purchase arrangement. I have completed the payment for the first and the second. In fact, this third one is a new one because it was assembled just six days ago. I cannot be riding an *adaidaita-sahu* based on the 'balance' agreement because it is not very advantageous to us as *adaidaita-sahu* riders. You see, we rely on this for survival at least for now. But we have hopes and aspirations. For me, it is not my hope to continue riding *adaidaita-sahu* to the end of my life. This is why I plan to engage in other means of livelihood. For example, when I completed the payment for the first tricycle I used, I sold it off and bought a plot of land which I know its value is always appreciating. I also sold off the second tricycle and bought another asset. My plan is to sell my first plot of land and the other asset and venture into another form of business after I finish paying this third one.

(Informal Interview/Male/28 years/2018)

Another respondent said, "I have a three year plan while I am into *adaidaita-sahu* riding. My aspiration is to be a soldier. Sincerely, I am determined to actualizing this three year plan and also becoming a soldier in the near future".

In another interview with an elderly *adaidaita-sahu* rider who also doubles as a traffic warder in Kano metropolis, he had this to say;

My hope and aspiration is to invest in my children so that they become educated and also venture into trading. Through this *adaidaita-sahu* riding, I support my children's education and I have also set up a provision shop in my locality which is being managed by my eldest son who is about to finish his secondary education. I am trying very hard to see that I get enough capital that will enable me quit *adaidaita-sahu* riding and continue with my trading business.

(IDI/Male/51 years/2018)

Similarly, *adaidaita-sahu* riding in Kano metropolis as stated earlier is increasingly becoming more popular among youth in the metropolis. Data collected shows that youth of poor socio-economic status are mostly engaged in *adaidaita-sahu* riding with a significant percentage that rely on it to continue their education. There are also graduates that are engaged in the trade.

### **Conclusion**

This paper explored socio-economic characteristics and the attendant everyday life experiences of *adaidaita-sahu* riders against the backdrop of popular narratives in Kano metropolis. Despite popular narratives that presents *adaidaita-sahu* riders generally as people of low life with criminal tendencies, a one-day field work exercise within Kano metropolis shows contrary evidences to this perceptions. To this end, this paper may serve as trigger to deeply debunk the myths surrounding the *adaidaita-sahu* riders' general popular narratives. It is pertinent to fully understand what constitute the basis for the general conception about the hordes of this workforce.

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