

Psychoactive Substances Abuse among Renting Motorcyclists in Nigeria: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to explore the perceptions of the renting motorcyclist (RM) on the psychoactive substance (PS) abuse and its perceived socio-economic and health consequences among operators in Sokoto town. The study selected nine participants through purposive sampling technique. Data was analyzed utilizing Nvivo v11 qualitative software, which led to the emergence of three themes. Based on the observed general pattern of the analyzed information, the result indicates that majority of the RM abused PS because the substance makes them work for longer hours, it protects them from cold and hunger, it keeps them awake, and it increases their energy during operation. Additionally, concerning the commonly abused PS, the result shows that Tramol, Cigarette, Arab tea, Marijuana, Kolanut, and Cough syrups are the commonly abused PS. Moreover, with regards to social, economic and health consequences of PS abuse, the result indicated persistent headache, road traffic accidents, inability to sleep, problems with the law enforcement agents, stress and depression, as well as family problems are the main costs of PS abuse. Consequently, this study recommends that Nigerian government should sustain educational programs on the hazards of PS abuse. Furthermore, government should impose laws so that substances that are psychoactive are not sold to individuals without medical prescriptions. Similarly, RM should be enlightened on the significance of rest and leisure. Finally, due to perceived health hazards of PS abuse, RM should be encouraged to seek for alternative jobs.

Keywords: Psychoactive substances, renting motorcyclists, abuse, Nigeria

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I. Introduction

Renting motorcyclists (RM) are individuals that engaged themselves in the commercial transportation of persons, goods and services from one place to another^{8, 15, 18, and 9}. Psychoactive substances (PS) are drugs that when consumed can alter brain functions causing temporary changes in attitude, perceptions, level of consciousness as well as behavior of and individual; in this case motorcyclists^{5, 21}. Worldwide, the commonest PS abused by RM consist of but are not limited to Lysergic diethylamide, inhalants, Marijuana, Pain killers, strong Teas and Amphetamine among other^{12, 9, 5, 19}. In the context of Nigeria, the commonest PS abused by RM to boost their performance includes Alabukum, Panadol extra, Kolanut, Snub Tobacco and Solvents among other^{12, 8, 5, 19}. Generally, most renting motorcyclists engaged in commercial operation due to economic crisis in Nigeria, the operations have been instrumental in bridging the huge communal transport gap in most cities all over Nigeria^{8, 15, 17, 9}. However, in spite of the advantage of renting motorcyclists to society, their jobs are not without risks that they exposed themselves to, their passengers, pedestrians and other individuals that use roads^{1, 12, 9}. In line with the foregoing, the major factors that are attributed to the incidence of road traffic accidents and other health related threats in Nigeria have been the practices of several renting motorcyclists riding under the influence of psychoactive substances; mainly to boost their work in realizing wealth^{8, 2, 15, 18, 9}. Furthermore, the rise of RM operation in Nigeria is related with joblessness resulting from such problems as the oil discovery and exploration, political instability and the burden of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)⁸. Likewise, the oil discovery and exploration had destroyed the agricultural sources of livelihood of the people where the resources were discovered^{8, 9}. Moreover, political instability and the introduction of SAP as an economic policy in Nigeria have breed greed and massive corruption, which unfavorably destroyed many viable sectors of the economy that might have created more employment opportunities^{13, 8, 9}.

Thus, Due to the preceding problems and subsequent unemployment, several youths have ventured into RM operation as an alternative business in order to sustain themselves⁸. The activities the youths engaged in include but are not limited to rearing of animals, petty trading, vulcanizing and welding among others; however, several youths opted for renting motorcycle operation^{8, 9}.

Moreover, the World Health Organization observed that all the organs of the body are prone to damages due PS abuse²¹. The report suggests that the Respiratory, Digestive, Heart, Liver and Nervous diseases have particularly been established to be due to the abuse of psychoactive substance^{14, 6, 16, 20, 19}. The chronic use

of alcohol for example, has been established to have caused substantial damage to virtually all organs; resulting into socio-economic and health concerns^{11, 21, 19}. The same report suggests that an embarrassing effect of psychoactive substance abuse, particularly the use of marijuana and amphetamine is the development of mental illness and socio-economic consequences to the abuser^{16, 19}.

Numerous studies have examined psychoactive substances abuse among renting motorcyclists^{7, 17, 5, 9, 19}. In a study of performance enhancement substance among Nigerian youth, Reference⁷ observed that many individuals use psychoactive substances in order to remain awake at night and to withstand the difficulties of their operation; among the jobless, the substances provide a positive way for repressing feelings of frustration. Specifically, in the case of RM, they abuse psychoactive substances perhaps to aid their desire to cope with difficulties related to their jobs or aid them in their work for the realization of monetary proceeds⁷. Another study by Reference⁵ indicates that psychoactive substances abuse exposed RM to road traffic accidents and other health related diseases including HIV/AIDS. Though scholars have examined psychoactive substances abuse among commercial motorcyclists, however, most previous studies have some methodological flaws, in that, most of the earlier studies mainly used quantitative design thereby neglecting the lived experience of the RM. In essence, previous studies failed to permit respondents to express themselves in their own words. In addition, according to Reference⁴, a phenomenon should be studied if it is broader than the previous ones and if it analyses the topic more methodologically or comprehensively.

Therefore, this study will examine psychoactive substances abuse using qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences of the participants in their own words, which quantitative research design, does not permit for. Additionally, this study will analyze the issue comprehensively and methodologically through the use of in depth interview to attain saturation; because it is clear that the previous studies did not utilize rich views of the participants to explore and describe why the participants in Sokoto abuse psychoactive substances, the commonest psychoactive substances they abuse as well as the social, economic and health consequences of psychoactive substances abuse.

Research Questions

This qualitative study will provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Why renting motorcyclists do abuse psychoactive substances in Sokoto?
2. What are the commonly abused psychoactive substances among renting motorcyclists in Sokoto?
3. What are the perceived socio-economic and health consequences of psychoactive substances abuse among renting motorcyclists in Sokoto?

II. Material and Methods

This research was carried out utilizing nine stand points of renting motorcyclists in Sokoto, namely, Sokoto central motor park, Sokoto central market, RunjinSambo bus-stop, Federal Government College roundabout, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital gate, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Giginya Secretariat, Specialist hospital gate and College of Nursing. Sokoto town has an estimated population of 581,300¹⁰. Based on the population figure, estimate shows that youth aged between 15 to 48 years constitute over 78 per cent¹⁰. According to Reference⁸ and⁵, majority of the people in the area have low literacy level; perhaps this explains why level of unemployment among the youth is high. Additionally, with regards to religion, majority of the residents practice Islam, followed by few Christians and other traditional religions¹⁰.

Research Design

This study employs qualitative descriptive research design to explore the perceptions of renting motorcyclists in Sokoto concerning the perceived reasons RM abused psychoactive substances, commonly psychoactive substances they abuse as well as the social, economic and health consequences of psychoactive substances abuse.

The study adopt phenomenological paradigm that stresses on explaining phenomena based on exploration, strengthening, and describing the “meaning” that individuals attached to the phenomenon under research⁴. Specifically, this study gathered data in the forms of words from the participants in the 9 renting motorcyclists stand points in Sokoto. This study did not utilized an underpinning theory, however, because of the experiences of researchers in the area of nursing and medical sociology as well as the preliminary understanding of the “meaning” that participants attached to their experiences, these obtained information served as guiding principle to exploring the subject matter under discussion.

Therefore, this study utilized qualitative cross-sectional design, where this study carried out a single face-to-face in-depth interview with the renting motorcyclists in Sokoto. The justification for employing the foregoing design is because it permits researchers to obtain rich views of the participants, as against employing longitudinal design, which could result in data loss since most of the RM could not return to the point of interview again after take-up, which is in line with the opinion of Reference⁴.

Ethical Issues, Sample and Data Collection Method

This study proposal was approved by the officials of the research ethics committee, Sokoto state Ministry of health. The study selected 9 respondents through purposive sampling technique.

The sample was selected because they were perceived to have the characteristics required to provide data saturation, which is in line with the views of Reference ⁴. Additionally, to encourage participants to give honest information, the purpose of the research, the technique for data collection and the perceived benefits that can be obtained was explained to the informants. The participants that were willing to take part in the study were given consent form which they signed. Because of the low level of education of most of the participants, the semi-structured interview schedule was translated into the participants' local language (Hausa language) through the services of an expert linguist; to enhance conception and validity of the data. Once permission was granted by the research participants, the interview session was videotaped, and notes were also taken. At the end of the interview sessions, the data was transcribed in English language verbatim. For the second time, the data collected from the RM were back-translated from Hausa to English language to smoothen data analysis.

Qualitative Data Analysis

This study commenced data analysis procedure through interpretation and reviewing of the transcribed face-to-face in-depth interviews conducted with the RM. The aim was to increase an understanding of the meaning participants attached to the phenomenon under study. Based on the responses of the informants, themes and categories were generated. The data collected was inputted into Nvivo v11 software for qualitative analysis, which facilitates for the emergence of themes; the interpretation of these themes was based on observed general pattern about the data, which is in line with the opinion of Reference ³. Furthermore, Nvivo qualitative software assists researchers to code all the data about the perceptions of the RM. Additionally, according to Reference ³, Nvivo qualitative software helps to identify all the important patterns of responses in a study data.

III. Result

The result of this study shown on Table 1 indicates that all the nine study participants are renting motorcyclists, representing 100% of the sample. This implies that the participants are not the actual owners of the motorcycle. Additionally, regarding the gender of the participants, the result of this study shows that all the participants are male, representing 100% of the sample. Again, with regards to the age of the participants, the age of 4 participants is between 15 to 26 years, representing 44.4% of the sample. Then, the age of 3 respondents are between 27 to 38 years, which represent 33.3% of the sample. Next are 2 participants whose ages are between 39-50 years, representing 22.2% of the sample.

Table no. 1: Shows demographic characteristics of the Participants

Participants Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Renting Motorcyclists	9	100
Total	9	100
Gender		
Male	9	100
Total	9	100
Age		
15-26 years	4	44.4
27-38 years	3	33.3
39-50 years	2	22.2
Total	9	100
Location		
Sokoto town	9	100
Total	9	100
Educational Qualification		
No formal education	5	55.5
Primary school	3	33.3
Secondary School	1	11.1
Total	9	100.0
Religion		
Islam	7	77.7
Christianity	2	22.2
Total	9	100.0

Moreover, concerning the locations of the RM, all the participants were located in Sokoto town spreading across nine stand points, representing 100% of the sample. In addition, with regards to the educational qualifications of the participants, 5 participants did not have formal education, which represents 55.5% of the sample. This is followed by 3 participants who completed primary school education, representing 33.3% of the sample. Next is 1 participant who completed secondary school education, which represents 11.1% of the sample.

Moreover, with regards to the religion of the participants, 7 participants practice Islam, which represents 77.7% of the sample, while 2 participants practice Christianity, which represents 22.2% of the sample. Below are the findings of this research based on the study's research questions.

Why Renting Motorcyclists Abused Psychoactive Substances

Psychoactive drugs are substances that when administered can modify brain functions causing temporary changes in attitude, perception, level of consciousness as well as the behavior of the individual; in this case RM⁵¹⁹. In this study, from the observed general pattern of the result of the qualitative interview as indicated in Figure 1, the participants (PIII, PIV, PVI, PII, PVIII & PV) generally stated that RM abused psychoactive substance to enhance their performance in the realization of monetary proceeds (Wealth). However, other participants (PVII & PI) refused to comment, perhaps, they are shy to speak. Additionally a participant (PIX) stated that he does not abuse any substances. In relation to the foregoing discussion; one of the participants asserts that:

Actually, the reason why I take Marijuana is because it keeps me active all day long; when I take the substances, I do not feel sleepy, so, I work throughout the day-especially when the day is not raining (Participant III, Renting Motorcyclist).

Additionally, complementing the views of participant III on the reasons why RM abuse PS, another renting motorcyclist augments that:

I take strong Tuareg's tea (Ataye) because it protects me from the harsh weathers. You know, sometimes the weather gets cold, especially during the rainy seasons and winter. Therefore, whenever I take some sips of tea, the substance keeps me warm, assisting me to work efficiently (Participant IV, Renting Motorcyclist).

The foregoing argument on why RM abuses PS was buttressed by the opinion of one other renting motorcyclist who asserts that:

During rainy seasons, I have to go to the farm to work from morning until afternoon. So, I only operate this motorcycle that I rent during the evening and night times. As such, to pay the owner I have to work hard. This is why I use substances such as Tramol, because it keeps me awake throughout the period I operate (Participant VI, Renting Motorcyclist).

In addition, giving affirmation to the views expressed by the foregoing participant on why RM abuse PS, another participant argued:

When I operate, especially on Mondays, Saturdays and Thursdays, there is usually high flow of passengers on the aforementioned days. So, I am on the move at all times to drop one passenger or another; I do not have the time to stop to feed myself. For this reason, I use certain Cough syrup because it helps to suppress the feeling of hunger. In addition, sometimes I combine Tuareg tea with Cough syrup because it proves more effective in protecting me from hunger (Participant II, Renting Motorcyclist).

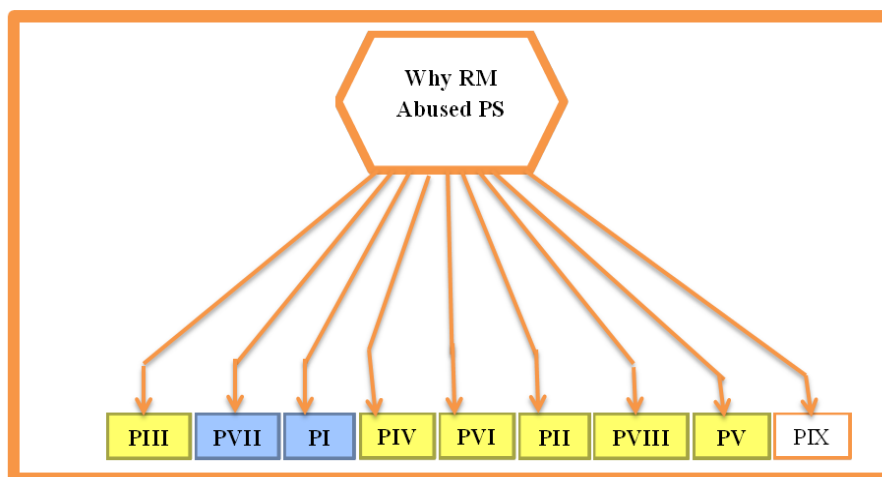


Figure 1: Why Renting Motorcyclists Abused Psychoactive Substances

The Commonly Psychoactive Substances Abused by the Renting Motorcyclists

Globally, some of the commonest substance abused in society consist of but are not limited to lysergic diethylamide, inhalants, Marijuana, Pain killers, strong teas and amphetamine among others^{21, 9, 19}. Furthermore, in the context of Nigeria, the commonest PS abused by RM to boost their performance in the realization of monetary proceeds include Alabukum, Panadol extra, Kolanut, Snub Tobacco and Solvents among others^{12, 8, 5, 19}. Based on the observed general pattern of responses provided by participants (PVIII, PV, PIII, PIV, PII, & PVI) during the face-to-face in-depth interview as indicated in Figure 2, the participants generally stated that the commonly PS abused by RM to enhance their operations include Tramol, Arab tea and cigarettes, marijuana and Kolanut as well as cough syrup. In relation to the foregoing, a participant, renting motorcyclist discloses that:

To operate optimally, I prefer to take Tramol because the substance kills' body pain and it makes me remain awake and alert throughout the period I conduct operations. In essence, it makes me feel strong throughout the day (Participant VIII, Renting Motorcyclist).

Moreover, affirming the views expressed by the foregoing participant on why RM abuse PS, another participant argued:

Actually, Marijuana is my favorite because it keeps me active all day long; when I take the substance, I do not feel sleepy, so I work throughout the day; especially when the day is not raining (Participant V, Renting Motorcyclist).

In a related opinion to that of participant V, another RM stresses that:

Well, I like both cigarette and Arab Tea because these combined substances keep me awake, energetic, thereby, making me want to operate to provide for my family. As you can see me now, I was just from home and delivered some groceries to my wife... the business continues (Participant III, Renting Motorcyclist)

Affirming the views expressed by the foregoing participants, a respondent argued:

The favorite substance that aids my business is Kolanut. Whenever I chew some, the substances keep me active and awake. With that, I work for longer hours during operation (Participant IV, Renting Motorcyclist).

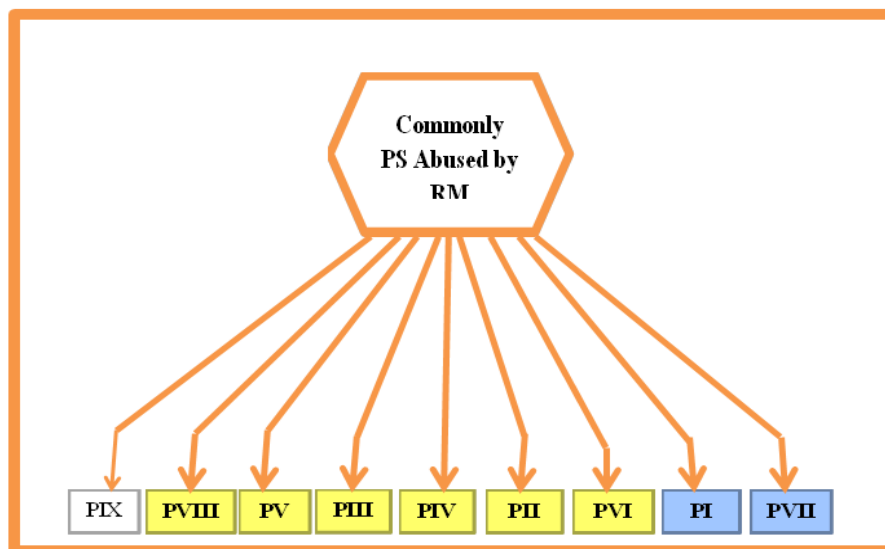


Figure 2: Commonly PS Abused by RM

Socio-economic and Health Consequences of Psychoactive Substances Abuse

The effects of drug abuse have far reaching consequences; as no organ of the body is immune to injuries¹⁹. According to Reference¹⁶, chronic alcoholism for example has serious social, economic and health consequences on the abusers. The most awkward effects of substance abuse, such as marijuana, amphetamine among others is the development of psychiatric illnesses^{16, 19}. Furthermore, some unfortunate results of use of mind altering substances include the occurrence of HIV/AIDS, and inability to cater for the family due to reckless spending on drugs among others^{19, 8}. Based on the observed general pattern of responses offered by the participants (PVI, PIV, PII, PIII, PV & PVIII) through the face-to-face in-depth interview as shown in Figure 3, the participants mostly stated that the abuse of psychoactive substances among renting operators exposed them to social, economic and health consequences. In line with the foregoing exposition, a participant, states that:

Although the symptoms are not frequent, but I suffered from headache when I use Tramadol. The severity of the ailment gets worse especially several hours after the effect of the substance has waned off (Participant VI, Renting Motorcyclist)

Moreover, corroborating the preceding views, another participant, and a renting motorcyclist affirms the consequences of PS abuse through observing that:

In fact, I have been having difficulty in sleep for sometime now due to long hours I spent working. Again, sometimes last month I had road traffic accident because it was difficult for me to concentrate when I felt sleepy; even though the injuries I sustained during the accident were minor ones (Participant IV, Renting Motorcyclist).

In a related opinion to that of participant IV, another operator argues that:

Even though the substances that I used assisted me to generate more money in the business, however, I mostly suffered traumatized and hopelessness. This situation affects my relationship with both passengers and law enforcement agents such as the police, road safety officials and tax collectors from Sokoto local governments (Participant II, Renting Motorcyclist).

Additionally, confirming the views expressed by participant VI, IV, and II on the consequences of PS abuse, another participant, and a renting motorcyclist asserts that:

The cough syrup that I consume to help me work well is expensive. The larger part of the money that I generated is spent on purchasing Benylin with Codeine. Invariably, my family complains that I did not give them enough money for groceries and upkeep (Participant III, Renting Motorcyclist).

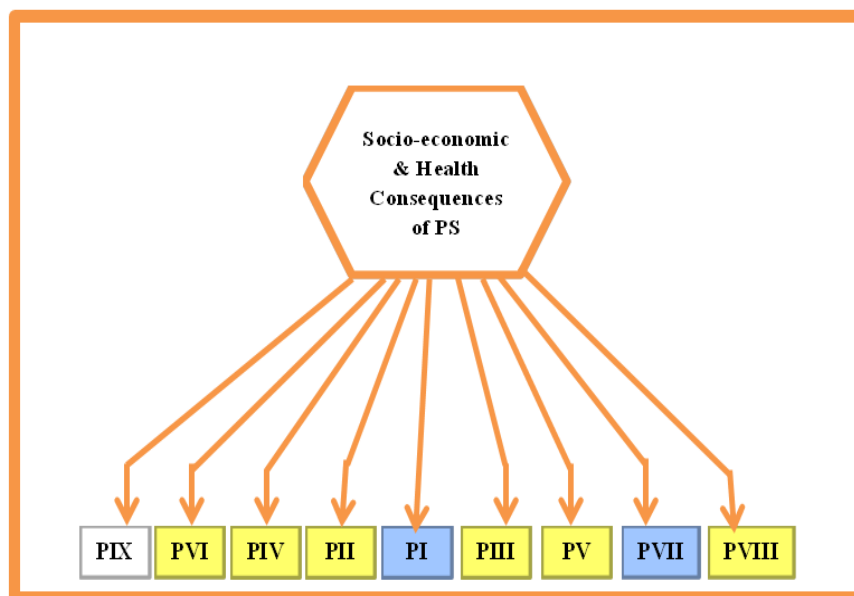


Figure 3: Socio-economic and Health Consequences of PS Abuse

III. Discussion

The result of this study contributes to understanding about the documented influences that psychoactive substance abuse have on socio-economic and health of the renting motorcyclists in Sokoto town. This study engaged nine renting motorcyclists as its sample. Generally the participants of this study indicated why renting operators use PS, the commonly PS that they use as well as the social, economic and health consequences of PS abuse among renting motorcyclists. Specifically, the result of this study indicated that most motorcyclists abused PS because it makes them work for longer hours, it protects them from the cold, it keeps them awake, it increases their energy during work, as well as protecting them from feeling of hunger.

Additionally, concerning the commonly abused PS among RM, the result of this study establishes that the operators abused Tramol, Cigarette, Arab tea, Marijuana, Kolanut, and Cough syrups. Moreover, this study identified the social, economic and health consequences suffered by the renting operators, which include persistent headache, road traffic accidents, inability to sleep, problems with the law enforcement agents such as the police and road traffic officers, stress and depression, as well as the operators' inability to cater for their family adequately because most of the resources they could have used for the needs of the family are squandered on drugs. The preceding affirmation was in line with the previous studies ^{12, 8, 5, 16, 21, 9, 19}. Therefore, approaches aimed at improving the socio-economic and health status of the operators should focus on tackling psychoactive substance use and misuse among renting motorcyclists and youths at large.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The objective of this research was basically to describe the insights of renting motorcyclists regarding psychoactive substance abuse as well as its perceived socio-economic and health consequences among renting motorcyclists. The participants opined that abuse of psychoactive substances among renting operators causes serious socio-economic as well as health menace to the operators. This study has confidence that by allowing the renting motorcyclists' chances to express their opinions in their own words, the outcome of the engagement will make for healthy case in lieu of firm actions by civil society organizations and government to address the menace of drug abuse particularly psychoactive substances.

Even though this paper has some shortcomings due to use of few sample size in the research design, which only allows for contextual generalization of the research findings, however, the results of the study are similar to other ones from Southern Nigeria. Thus, the preceding result suggests that psychoactive substances abuse enormously poses negative consequences on the social, economic as well as health status of the renting motorcyclists in Sokoto, Nigeria. Therefore, the result of this study will complement the current body of literature on the consequences of psychoactive substance use in healthcare studies.

Consequently, due to the destructive nature of PS abuse among the RM, this study recommends that it is important to eliminate the menace through measures of educating the vulnerable youths to avoid the abuse of PS. Precisely, drug education should be introduced in the school's curriculums; so that pupil will receive knowledge about substances that are licit and illicit at first value. Additionally, the Nigerian government should start up and sustain educational programs on the hazards of PS abuse, since the program will increase awareness

on the dangers of PS use among the RM in Sokoto. Furthermore, government should impose laws so that substances that are psychoactive are not sold to individuals without medical prescriptions; those who violate the law should be punished properly. In addition, substances such as Tramol, Arab tea, Marijuana, amphetamine and Cough syrup should be charged heavily so that the setting of the price will make it hard for RM to afford. Officials charged with maintaining law and order on the road should insist that operators mount gadgets such as side mirrors and helmet on all motorcycles. This assists to avert and reduce road traffic accidents. Similarly, RM should be enlightened on the significance of rest and leisure because this helps in reducing health related difficulties such as inability to sleep, headache, stress and depression among others. Moreover, Nigerian governments at all levels should strengthen programs aimed to reduce poverty; because when the youths are empowered through the creation of job opportunities that are descent, most of the problem that exposes RM to longing to make quick money, invariably leading to PS abuse will be eradicated. Moreover, taking into cognizance the health hazards of PS abuse, RM should be invigorated to seek different means of livelihood.

In conclusion, this paper recommends for further studies on the topic of renting motorcyclists in a new social context using different research methodology. This will assist in examining the subject matter in other societies and addressing the topic more comprehensively. Likewise, future studies could help to identify and describe the present and upcoming social, economic and health related issues that this study could not have addressed.

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