

REPOA Brief



Urban Motorcycle Taxi - related crimes in Dar es Salaam and Pwani Regions, Tanzania

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Key Messages

Motorcycle taxis provides alternative public transport but are also linked to crimes such as theft and other organized crimes.

Stakeholders have been actively fighting against several crimes facing motorcycle taxis.

Lack of regulation and awareness contributes to safety concerns

Stronger regulations, public awareness campaigns, and better enforcement of laws are essential to combat motorcycle taxi-related crimes.

Introduction

Africa is urbanising rapidly, a process that presents both opportunities and challenges (Tacol, 2017). In the East African region, and specifically in Tanzania, one of the livelihood opportunities brought about by urbanisation is the motorcycle taxi riding business (commonly known as "bodaboda"), which employs millions in the region (Munishi & Kirumirah, 2022). However, the informal motorcycle taxi industry faces several challenges, one of the most significant being urban crime. Motorcycle taxi riders not only fall victim to crime but are also often perpetrators of crime in urban areas (Munishi & Kirumirah, 2022). Various efforts have been made by stakeholders to improve the motorcycle taxi business as a livelihood source and to address the associated crime problems (AFCAP, 2019; 2015; Adiambo, 2020). However, these efforts have not yielded favorable results, as crime continues to rise. While previous studies on motorcycle taxi riding (Divall, 2019; Opondo & Kiprop, 2019; Olvera, 2021) have focused on livelihood issues and taxi systems in countries like Indonesia, Mali, and Kenya, generalising their findings to Tanzania is difficult due to political and economic differences.

The overall aim of this policy brief is to offer a better understanding of the crime situation within the context of motorcycle taxi riding, assess the

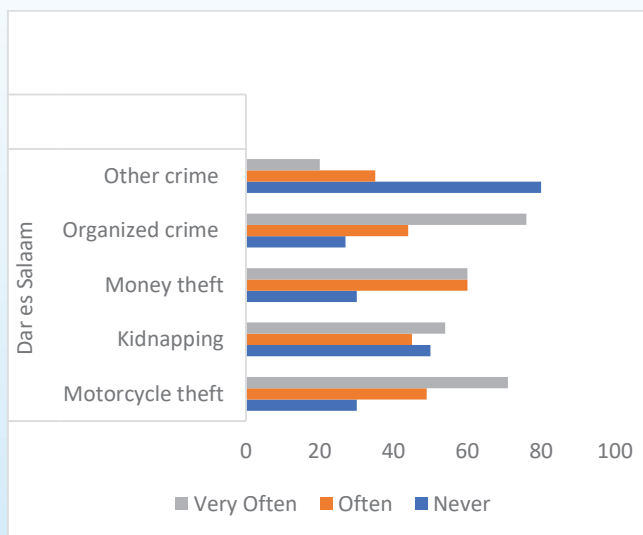
coping capacities of stakeholders, and suggest strategies to alleviate the associated crimes. The study was conducted in Dar es Salaam city and three urban centres in Pwani region: Kibaha, Bagamoyo, and Kisarawe townships. A total sample of 287 respondents were selected through both purposive and random sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires, documentary review, and in-depth interviews.

Findings of the study

The nature and dynamics of crime related to the motorcycle taxi operations

The study finds that various crimes are associated with motorcycle riding in Dar es Salaam and the Coast region. Riders are commonly victims of theft, including the theft of their motorcycles, kidnapping, money theft, and other organized crimes. In some instances, riders have been murdered by criminals while attempting to fight back and protect their motorbikes. The findings show that, although the crime situation is similar in both Dar es Salaam and Coast region, reports from Dar es Salaam are more frequent than those from Coast region. This disparity could be attributed to differences in population size and the number of motorcycle riders in Dar es Salaam.

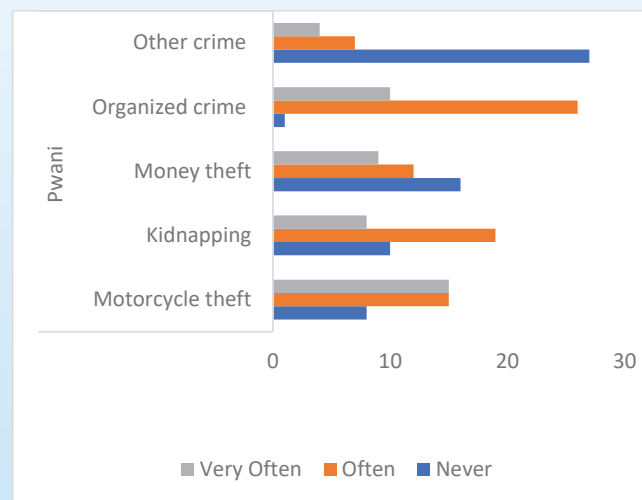
Figure 1: Crimes in Dar es salaam region



In terms of passengers and other individuals, snatching crimes are notably more common in Dar es Salaam compared to the Coast region. Additionally, serious cases of sexual harassment, defilement, and physical assaults have been

reported, many of which involve motorcycle riders in both regions. Kidnapping is a shared problem affecting both riders and customers, with cases reported in both Dar es Salaam and the Coast region.

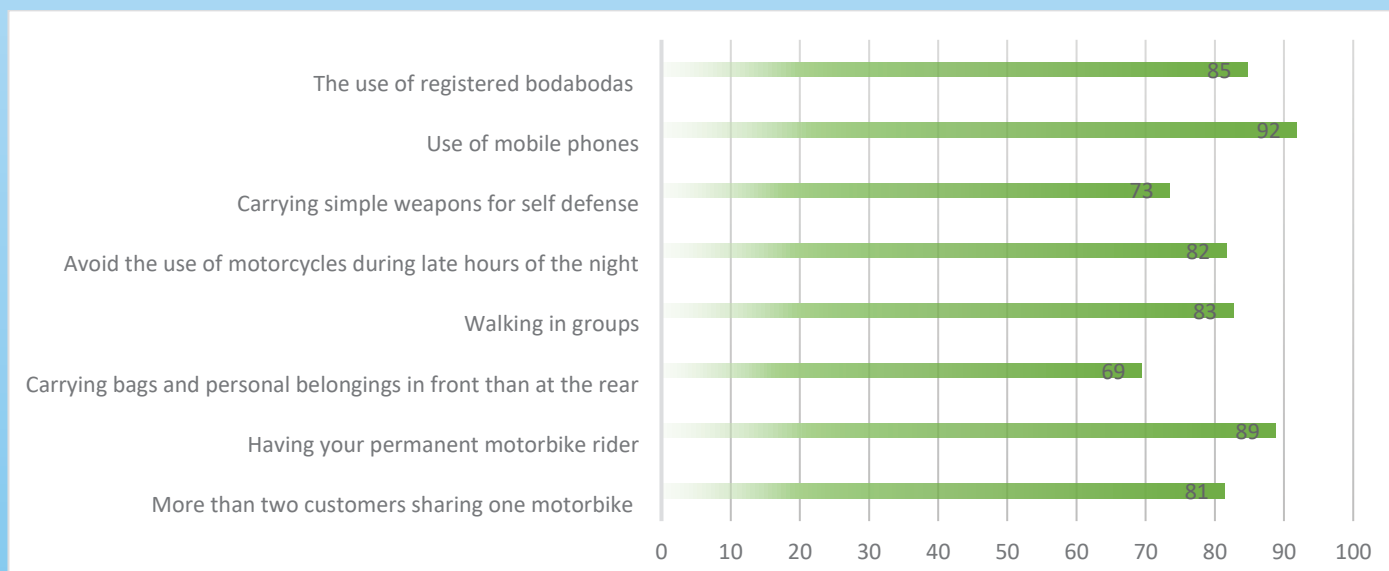
Figure 2: Crimes in Coast region



Crime victims' coping strategies and the capacity to cope with the crime

Both riders and customers need to take precautions by avoiding riding to crime prone areas, using tracking devices, avoiding suspicious customers, parking in open spaces, accompanying one another, carrying simple weapons for self defense such as pepper sprays, the use of mobile phones for emergency calls and connecting with the police have been more of the common strategies. Findings indicate that, riders have also been working together with police in case of such scenes. At different moments mobile phones have been used to share information regarding potential dangers and suspected criminals. While riders in the studied regions share the same strategies, the intensity of their use is different. For instance, while in Dar es salaam, the use of phones, using registered riders under BOLT and UBER with GPRS and remote ignition and customers accompanying each other have widely been used, unlike in the coast region, where riders carry simple weapons and share motorcycles.

Figure 3: Coping strategies used by Passengers



Stakeholders' initiatives in addressing motorcycle riding-related crimes in Dar es Salaam

The findings reveal that several stakeholders have actively worked to combat motorcycle riding-related crimes, employing various strategies to address the situation. The police force has been at the forefront of the fight against these crimes. While respondents acknowledge that the police's efforts are sometimes limited and not always effective due to elements of corruption, they recognize the significant role the police play in preventing crimes and recovering stolen items.

Politicians, on the other hand, are reported as being less active in tackling motorcycle-related crimes in both Dar es Salaam and Coast region. Their involvement appears to be limited to election periods, where they engage with riders primarily for political reasons. It was also surprising to note that no non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were reported to be working with motorcycle riders in the studied regions regarding their safety or in addressing crime prevention.

The findings further highlight the proactive role played by citizens and fellow bodaboda riders in preventing crimes. These individuals have helped by rescuing victims, arresting criminals, sharing vital information with authorities, and helping victims when necessary. Despite the active participation of various actors in combating these crimes, creating a safe and crime-free society requires the involvement of every citizen in preventing such criminal activities.

Regarding the police force, the study suggests that unless dishonesty among some officers is addressed, it could undermine the efforts being made and could exacerbate criminal activities related to bodaboda business.

Effective strategies for curbing down motorcycle taxi riding related crimes

The findings from respondents indicate that while several initiatives have been put in place to address motorcycle riding-related crimes, respondents had different perceptions on the effectiveness of those initiatives. For example, many riders expressed the view that current initiatives primarily focus on protecting customers rather than the riders themselves. However, they acknowledged that registering riders and their

parking stations is an important step in improving safety. Interestingly, riders reported isolating community police agents, as they felt that these agents were betraying them by providing information to the police, which lead to their arrest on minor charges. On the other hand, customers found certain initiatives, such as riders wearing uniforms with identifiable information, educating riders on security issues and registering all riders to be highly effective. These findings were consistent across both Dar es Salaam and Coast regions.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The prevalence of motorcycle-related crimes is significant in both regions covered in the study. Periodic motorcycle theft, kidnapping, and money theft have been widely reported among riders, while snatching and kidnapping have been frequently reported by customers and other victims. Despite the efforts of various stakeholders, including the police and local governments, their initiatives have sometimes been deemed ineffective. To help riders cope more effectively with the crime situation, the following suggestions should be considered.

First, a nationwide company should be established with a motorcycle monitoring system, like the ones used by UBER and BOLT taxi companies. This system would require all riders to be registered, and it would connect riders with customers, enhancing both safety and accountability for both parties.

Tracking devices should be mandatory for all individuals who register as motorcycle taxi operators. The government should facilitate easy access and low cost for these devices for all riders. Second, police officers must respond promptly to crimes, conduct independent investigations, and ensure the arrest of criminals involved in motorcycle-related offenses.

Third, riders should receive continuous education on how to handle situations involving suspected criminals, as well as how to avoid engaging in sexual harassment of passengers. This education should not be limited to Dar es Salaam but should be implemented nationwide. Without such training, there is a risk of continued violence, including killings, rape, school dropouts among young girls, and serious sexual harassment against

women, which are often linked to motorcycle riders.

Fourth, authorities involved in community policing should refrain from harassing riders and, instead, focus on supporting them. Current findings suggest that community policing has primarily been used to harass riders rather than assist them. Therefore, the police and local government authorities need to restructure the operations of community police, clearly define their areas of responsibility, outline their duties and limitations, and provide guidelines on how to address lawlessness effectively.

Fifth, disguised motorcycle riders should be identified through an effective national wide registration of motorcycles and riders linking the police, LATRA, and other relevant authorities. This initiative would help eliminate riders who disguise themselves and turn out to be criminals.

Finally, the government, through the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) and the police should regulate the trade of second-hand motorcycle parts. For example, all imported spare parts should have a unique identification number. This would help minimize the theft of motorbikes, as it is believed that stolen bikes are often disassembled and sold as second-hand parts.

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