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# **EXPLORING THE AWARENESS OF EMERGENCY HELP-LINES AMONG TAXI DRIVERS IN IKEJA ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION OF LAGOS STATE**

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## CHAPTER TEN

# EXPLORING THE AWARENESS OF EMERGENCY HELP-LINES AMONG TAXI DRIVERS IN IKEJA ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION OF LAGOS STATE

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### INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies are central to a country's growth. Telecommunication particularly is vital because it serves as a framework to several sectors in an economy. Telecommunications services enhance living standards and improve productivity and efficiency. Thus, communication and the technologies that support it occupy a strategic position in our daily endeavour (Ndolo & Onwumechili, 2015). In the same vein, during an incident, communication with the community becomes especially critical. Emergency communications may include alerts and warnings, directives about evacuation, curfews and other self-protective actions. It may also include information about response status, family members, available assistance and other matters that affect response and recovery.

When an emergency occurs, the tendencies are that confusion engulfs the environment as the victims and by-standers may not know where they can immediately source for assistance. Such emergencies may include armed robbery, kidnapping, youth unrest, communal/religious crisis, election violence, assault, rape/sexual violence among others. Other related case of emergencies may include fire outbreaks, flood, traffic gridlocks, domestic accidents, disease outbreak e.t.c. (Overseas Security Advisory Council, 2016)

Most often, when emergencies are not adequately responded to, the causality may be high. Accordingly, governments make provision for attending to emergencies. In governance, particularly in a developing country like Nigeria, the citizens cannot be left without some form of assistance in this regard especially concerning communication. Wilson (2017) agrees that:

The future of communication and development in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular rests squarely on whether the rulers and the drivers of development communication will operate on the same page and pay

attention to the real issues rather than the individually and politically correct issues which have continued to place us at the level of political infantilism. (p. 10)

In view of this, Wilson (2017) posits that development should mean the application of new (developmental) ideas to practical problems such as the challenges that come with handling emergencies. Rohwerder (2015) in his assessment of crisis management in Africa noted that the Federal government of Nigeria has developed a plan for addressing emergencies. Known as the Nigeria's National Disaster Management Framework (NDMF) the document covers the range of crises and emergencies such as drought, desertification, flooding, epidemics, coastal erosion, dam failure, building collapse, oil spillage, maritime collision or accidents, bomb explosions, communal clashes, fires, air crashes and boat mishaps. To implement the provisions of the framework, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) was set up in March 1999. NEMA's implementation plan includes the National Disaster Response Plan, the Search and Rescue/Epidemic Evacuation Plan, the National Nuclear and Radiological Plan, Early Warning System on Epidemics, amongst others.

The NDMF also requires that at the State level, there should be a State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and at the local government level, there should be a Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA). The capacity to respond to emergencies should be developed across the various stakeholders including relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), the military, police, para-military and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The framework also provides that the Disaster Response Units (DRUs) which are established in different military formations across the country should support civil authorities in emergencies (Rohwerder, 2015).

Apparently, in further response to the provisions of the National Disaster Management Framework and the challenges of an emerging mega city like Lagos, the Lagos state government on April 15, 2008, launched the '767' toll free emergency help-line. The line was provided to complement the '112' national emergency lines. The line is linked to the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) and other relevant emergency organisations. With an estimated 21 million people in 2016 according to the World Population Review (2016), Lagos state population is expected to double in 2050. Presently, the state stands as the largest city in Africa, hence, the need to adequately prepare for emergencies that goes along with such developments. At the launch of the Lagos state emergency lines, the former Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babatunde Fashola said that:

We have decided to voluntarily take on the responsibility of assisting the police and to frontally address the issues of security in a manner that would be sustainable, practical, responsive, accountable and inclusive. The dedicated '767' distress call system is one important product of this approach. One of the main challenges of any efficient security system is communications. It was this realisation that informed the determination of the Lagos State Government, working with the fund, to design a two-tier communications system that would provide a dedicated, interruption free line of communication with relevant security and emergency agencies to enhance their quick response to any actual or pending situation requiring an immediate and effective response. (para. 6, 10)

In the mix of emergency communication and response, taxi drivers are essential in the scheme of things. In Lagos state, Nigeria, taxi drivers are those taxi operators registered with the Lagos State Taxi Drivers and Cab Operators Association and the Lagos state transport management authorities as commercial taxi operators. In most cases, their vehicles are painted in yellow and black colour as recommended for taxi operators in Lagos state with designated unit parks across all local government areas in the state. In line with the nature of their occupation, taxi drivers across Lagos metropolis are presumed to be essential agents in communicating information on emergencies to relevant authorities for response. Due to their high mobility across the state, they frequently witness emergencies such as road traffic accidents, highway robbery, protest or other forms of civil unrest, which sometimes affect their operations. It is assumed that taxi drivers may be veritable sources for providing facts to relevant authorities in case of an emergency, as they are likely to have on-the-spot information in certain instances.

More so, as taxi drivers, they are faced with many personal safety risks and emergencies. Barton (n.d) agrees that the taxicab business is a very different one from most occupations because there is a very real and high risk of personal danger to each driver. Unfortunately, it appears to be getting steadily worse each year according to statistics. For instance, a report on workplace violence and homicide places taxi operations as the most dangerous occupation in North America.

Taxi drivers' exposure to such emergencies became high because they work alone; work at night and work long shifts, which increases their risk of fatigue. The taxi drivers also work in isolated and high-crime areas; they usually have cash on hand and always deal with strangers. It could also be that the drivers work shifts in busy nightlife areas; they work in high demand periods (e.g. sporting events and holiday periods); or pick up passengers who may be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Sometimes, they work in areas where no one is readily available to provide assistance for them in case of an emergency and places where visibility can be poor or lighting inadequate. Unknowingly, the taxi drivers may be providing cover for potential assailants and there may be communication barriers. These factors also makes taxi drivers potential target for difficult or aggressive passengers, fare evasion, robbery and assault. (Victoria Taxi Directorate, 2007; State of Queensland, 2012)

Thus, to be of assistance in emergencies to themselves and others, it is essential that the taxi drivers are familiar with provisions such as the emergency help-lines provided by the government. It therefore become important that the level of awareness of the emergency help-lines and possibility of their use among taxi drivers within the state should be examined to provide insights on strategic emergency response policy formulation and adjustment by the State government.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over time, the need for protection and safety in emergencies have become very important amidst the multiplicity of challenges associated with the day-to-day human endeavour. When a severe accident happens, it is essential that the time between when the victims get support should be minimal to save lives. This period may be referred to as the hour of chance for survival. In view of this, emergency response is highly time-critical and information dependent. Every moment counts and emergency organizations need to access information that supports their decision-making and informs them about the scale and location of the emergency, the damages, and the availability of human and physical resources (Hartikainen, 2013).

In the scheme of things, the taxi drivers are very essential in emergency communication particularly in an emerging mega city like Lagos state. For instance, among other functions, the State of Queensland (2012) stated that taxi operators and owners must ensure that their operation is carried out without risk to health and safety. To achieve that, they must ensure that safety equipment (including security cameras) is fitted and maintained; ensure drivers understand how to operate the vehicle and its fittings; ensure drivers are aware of safety equipment including security devices, cameras and distress buttons, and are trained in operating the equipment. Critically, the taxi operators must communicate and understand safe operational procedures. The drivers must also ensure that they, their passengers and any other person who may be affected by their driving activities are safe. They are to cooperate with any reasonable policy or procedure relating to health or safety at the workplace—in this case the roads by installing surveillance and security equipment in their taxis such as alarms or emergency communication systems.

The social categories theory posits that persons belonging to the same category are likely to access, assess and react to certain information the same way. Thus, it is assumed that taxi drivers in the Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state are also exposed to emergency response information as identified by SoQ (2012). Most likely, they would have experienced one form of emergency or the other in their course of the duty. (European Transport Safety Council, 2016; Frith 2013) The taxi drivers in Lagos state are likely to be adaptive to these emergency communication and response measures such as the emergency help-lines. However, little is known about literature on their level of awareness, possibility of use and challenges the taxi drivers may encounter using the emergency help-lines. As a pilot study, this is what this paper seeks to examine in order to provide insights for development agents in this area.

### **Research Objectives**

In view of the foregoing, the objectives of this study among others are:

1. To examine the level of awareness of emergency help-lines among taxi drivers in Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state;
2. To examine if taxi drivers in Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state would dial the emergency help-lines in an emergency; and
3. To examine the challenges faced by the taxi drivers in Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state when using the emergency help-lines.

### **Research Questions**

Having deciphered the objectives, the research questions for this study are:

1. What is the level of awareness of emergency help-lines among taxi drivers in the Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state?
2. Would taxi drivers in the Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state dial emergency help-lines in an emergency?
3. What factors militate against the use of emergency help-lines among taxi drivers in the Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Emergency Communication**

The concept of emergency requires some understanding. Scholars (Landgren & Nulden 2007; Hartikainen, 2013) have described an emergency as an event that threatens people, property or the environment and requires coordinated and fast response from different organizations to minimize its negative impacts. Emergencies can be categorized as disasters, catastrophes and

smaller disruptive events. Disasters can be natural, technological or social. For example, earthquakes, tornados and floods are natural disasters; nuclear disasters, water and air pollutions are technological disasters while revolutions, riots and sabotage are social disasters. However, the term emergency may be used as an umbrella term that includes disasters, catastrophes and smaller disruptive events.

Knuth, Szymczak, Kuecuekbalaban & Schmidt (2017) also agree that what constitutes an emergency may create some variations in terms of how it is being understood. However, despite these possible variations, the internationally agreed glossary of basic terms related to disaster management defines an emergency as “an event which is characterized by its sudden and usually unforeseen occurrence, which calls for immediate actions in order to reduce its potential harmful and adverse effects”.

The scope and goals of an effective emergency management are saving lives, preventing injuries and protecting properties and the environment. Generally, emergency management phases are divided into three. They are the preparedness phase, the response phase and the recovery and mitigation phase. The preparedness phase involves prevention or reducing the negative impact of incidents when they cannot be prevented. The response phase includes activities often designed to provide emergency assistance and reduce secondary damages with adequate information to the public. The recovery and mitigation phase involves reaching a state of normalization after the specific emergency event either in the long or short term depending on the nature of the emergency (Knuth et al 2017).

It is essential that communication in an emergency is precise from the part of the informant, the responder and the affected to minimize casualties or prevent them as the case may be. Johar, Osman & Aziz (2017) state that emergency communications may include early warning, command on evacuation, curfews and other self-protection measures and other matters which influence relief, response and recovery activities. Although emergencies may not be avoided, but efforts can be made to reduce death, injuries and property damages through better communications and better planning.

Presently, there is a growing need on secured emergency communication among emergency responders. Hartikainen (2013) and Simon, Goldberg & Adini (2015) agree that communication is one of the fundamental tools of emergency management although the landscape for emergency management is becoming very diverse. To achieve success, the existing emergency communications structures must ensure that the technical aspects of confidentiality, availability and integrity of information is observed. This must be done within the scope of the social rules, norms and structures that guide the social system. It should take cognizance of existing national, organizational and inter-organisational communication guidelines.

In addition, advancement in information and communication technologies as noted by Ronga et al (2015) is enabling new channels of information retrieval and dissemination to reach people through mobile phones, Internet connected devices, smart TVs e.t.c. However, the provision of an effective emergency alert service depends on the timely and reliable distribution of the alert messages to the intended audiences, which may be the authority or people living around the area. In view of these, the medium and the system must be well integrated to deliver an effective emergency communication.

### **Taxi Operators and Emergency Communication**

Taxis play significant role in the public transportation system. Across major cities, they are very visible, transacting businesses and offering designated services. Frith (2013) notes that “taxis provide a 24-hour door-to-door service and are thus a very important part of our public transport network” (p.i). The nature of the taxis operation predisposes them to factors, which warrants that they understand the concept of safety and security. Vivanco (2014) agrees that “driving a taxi sits among the most dangerous occupations, according to federal statistics, and seems to consistently snag a spot on the list of most stressful jobs. Cab drivers work long hours while scanning the streets for potential passengers and dealing with road rage and perhaps most importantly facing the possibility of getting attacked in their taxis”. (para. 1)

The importance of safety in taxi operation was underscored by the State of Queensland (2012) when they states that “the work health and safety law aims to ensure the health and safety of workers and others where work is carried out at a workplace. A workplace is anywhere work is done, including in or around a taxi” (p. 3). In a general document, which also defines taxi drivers as Persons Conducting Business or Undertakings (PCBU), the State further legislated that the PCBUs have a duty of care to ensure, as far as it is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers at work in the business or undertaking. The PCBU must also ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of other people is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the business or undertaking. All PCBUs involved in the operation of a taxi must consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with each other to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the operation of the taxi is carried out without risk to health and safety.

The roles as specified indicate that taxi operators have a responsibility to ensure their own safety, the safety of their passengers and other persons around them in case of an emergency. Thus, the taxi operators are compelled to “communicate and ensure safe operational procedures are understood by drivers, including procedures in case of an incident...ensure the health and safety of themselves, passengers, and any other person who may be affected by their driving activities” (p.4).

The National Occupational Standard (NOS) (2013) agrees that taxi operators should be able to assess the risk of any emergency around them for the purpose of adequate communication whenever they have to give details. The document further states that taxi operators must take action to isolate or remove the risk; report adverse incidents to the appropriate person or body; and record vital details and communicate details of a particular hazard and risk so that the appropriate authorities can implement contingencies plans. For a taxi operator to be an effective communicator during an emergency, the NOS advices that the drivers must know the 'duty of care' he has in relation to passengers and other road users. He must understand the different roles of the emergency services and personnel who can offer support in the case of an emergency.

The steps taken by the New Zealand transport authorities (NZTA) to curb the incidences of attacks on taxi drivers stressed the need for knowledge among the taxi drivers as proposed in the NOS. For instance, Frith (2013) notes that the New Zealand transport authority directed that all approved taxi operators (ATOs) must install NZTA approved in-vehicle security cameras. They must also have a telecommunications system that links all taxis to their ATO and provides them with an emergency alert facility (“panic button”) on 24-hours, 7 day a week basis from a fixed location. They must maintain a fulltime alert assessment and response capability. The Rule further states that the ATOs operating rules must contain procedures for the operation of an in-

vehicle security camera system, how the recorded material will be handled and how access to it will be controlled. It should also have details of the telecommunications system through which their emergency alert and response facility will be provided. More so, the procedures for managing an emergency alert received from a driver, including sending notification to the police, establishing a two-way communication with the driver and notifying the approved taxi organisation must be specified.

States and regions in some countries have made attempt to ensure easy and quickly activated emergency response for their taxi drivers. For instance, the State of Victoria in Australia has the M13 alert installed in taxis across the metropolis. The drivers are to press the M13 alarm if they find themselves in a dangerous situation such as an assault or robbery. The button gives them radio priority and a direct line to the station of the taxi so the driver can alert his office that there is an emergency. It thus behoves the driver to let his employers or station managers know where he is, what is happening and provide as much information as possible about the situation. The alarm will also activate the Global Positioning system (GPs) which shows the station and the emergency authorities the exact geographical location of the driver. The station manager in turn alerts the police and other taxis in the area - that the initiating driver is in danger and require assistance.

In the wake of the recurrent terror attacks in the city of London, Cahill (2017) reported that taxi hire app *Mytaxi* launched an initiative to ensure London cab drivers are equipped to help in emergencies in the capital. The campaign aimed to teach more than 17,000 black cab drivers skills in health and safety, psychology and handling crisis. The scheme seeks to take advantage of the network of drivers across the capital in managing emergencies. Phillips (cited in Cahill, 2017) states that “threats to the nation's capital are changing at an unprecedented pace. You can pretty much guarantee that whatever incident happens in London, a black cab will be at the scene or nearby. Professionalising their response is a brilliant way to help keep Londoners safe”.

In essence, these emergency and response procedures should be easily and quickly activated by the taxi driver; should initiates a two-way communication with a person able to arrange assistance; and, should establish the identity and location of the driver or the taxi (Frith, 2013).

### **Empirical Review**

Although little is known in terms of study on the awareness and uses of emergency lines during emergencies, some studies exist on attempt and approaches in general emergency communication and few others involving tax drivers. Erskine & Bach (2013) in their study on emergency communication in the United States of America found that the use of smartphones tops the priority agenda of the US government. They noted that since the September 11 attack in the US, significance advancement has been made concerning emergency communication with the use of smartphones. Hitherto, such emergency communication has been dominated by the use of land-mobile such as walkie-talkies and other mobile phones devices before they became excessively overtaxed and expensive. It thus limited the first emergency-responders' ability to use, take and send pictures and videos of emergency scenes. For the efficiency of the smartphone in this regard, the study advocated governments' funding and research to enable smartphone and data security that will provide and effective emergency communication for the victims, the informants and the responders.

On social media and emergency communication, Knuth et al (2017) in their study discovered the use of various social media channels (Facebook, YouTube and Twitter) as well as Apps at



different phases of emergencies for information exchange and behavior instructions usage. They found that the widespread use and integration of social media and their real-time character and multi-media integration have made them practical emergency communication tools. However, they also noted that drawbacks such as unconfirmed or unreliable information, privacy issues and possible technical problems might limit the usefulness of social media channels in certain circumstances.

Although Simon et al (2015) also observed these technical challenges in their study, but concluded that the social media provides a good alternative in emergency communication. Their conclusion was based on their observation that during an emergency, communication lines may be overloaded and cellular networks overwhelmed as too many people attempt to use them to access information needed to handle and address the emergency. Thus, the social media provides opportunities for engaging citizens in the emergency management by both disseminating information to the public and accessing information from them. On the issue of information validity on social media, they submit that the social media is self-regulated because the audiences have the tendency to checkmate themselves regarding false information. Realistically, the usefulness of the social media in emergency communication depends on the quality of the collected information (Popoola et al, 2013).

As a suggestion for such harmonization between the social media and other media of communication in emergency communication, Shih, Han & Carroll (2015) proposed the Community Incident Report (CIR) in emergency planning and communication. The CIR is an emergency planning system that externalizes community knowledge on persisting issues and common mitigation strategies by integrating police reports, local crisis information, and social multimedia content to foster citizens' awareness of local emergency information and to assist emergency planners in planning for recurring and cyclical events.

Although the social media is penetrating the realm of emergency communication, Hartikainen (2013) established in his study on secure emergency communications of emergency responders in Kemi municipality in Finland that inter-organisational cooperation and understanding among emergency response units is crucial to effectively address emergencies. His conclusion was because most times, there appear to be an information breakdown between the relevant agencies at the emergency response stage. To overcome these communication challenges and ensure confidentiality, availability and integrity of emergency information, those responsible for information security in emergency organizations must equip their personnel to be responsible.

Regarding the involvement of the taxi drivers in emergencies, Frith (2013) found in his review of taxi drivers operations in the New Zealand that in the years leading up to 2010 the level of violence by passengers against taxi drivers has increased. In September 2010, the New Zealand Transport Authority (NZTA) released a document, which stated that in the period from January 2000 to February 2010, the New Zealand Police recorded 677 assaults against taxi drivers. It states that two taxi drivers had been killed in assaults between December 2008 and 2017. This led to legislative action to make changes to the parts of the Land Transport Rules related to taxi operation in order to ameliorate this violence.

From the review so far, it may be noted that emergency communication or communication in an emergency requires that the government put in place the necessary infrastructure to aid the citizens' communication in an emergency. Aside the existence of such infrastructure such as radio spectrum and special lines, there is also the need for citizens' literacy on how and what to

communicate to aid the informant-responder relationship in an emergency particularly with the advancement in technology and the advent of the social media. However, this paper seek to contribute to existing literatures in terms of the awareness and uses of these infrastructure/social provisions such as the emergency help-lines.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The diffusion of innovation and social categories theories provide logical support for this study. Rogers (2010) defines diffusion as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” and innovation as “an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption”. Thus, the diffusion of innovations theory explains the how, the why and the rate at which new ideas and technology spread through cultures.

The diffusion of innovation theory analysis how the social members adopt the innovative ideas and how they made the decision towards it. Both mass media and interpersonal communication channel is involved in the diffusion process. According to the theory, innovations should be widely adopted in order to attain development and sustainability. In real life situations, the adaptability of the culture played a very relevant role wherever the theory was applied. Rogers proposed four elements of diffusion of innovations. They are innovations (the idea); the communication channel (for spreading information about the innovation); time (length of period for the people to adopt the innovation) and the social system (the inter-related network of people for whom the innovation was made). Decisions to adopt the innovation may be optional, collective or authoritative.

Summarily, some intricacies that gravitates an adopter towards an innovation are the level of improvement of the innovation; level of compatibility; the level of complexity or otherwise; ease of use, visibility and access (Rogers, 2010).

The second theory is the social categories theory. The social categories theory as propounded by Melvin De Fleur in 1970 assumes that the mass media audience consists of different sub-groups. Members of a particular social category have identical values, interest and attitudes, which will be different from those of members of other social categories. In effect, the theory agrees that members of a given social category often seek out similar communication messages, which they will also respond to similarly. While the theory recognises the heterogeneity of the modern society, it assumes that people with a similar location in the social structure will have a similar way of life. Similarly, a member of a particular social category will select more or less the same communication content and will respond to it in almost the same way (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2012).

These set of theories are relevant to this study because the introduction of an emergency line by the state was an innovation developed to address the issues of prompt communication and recovery during an emergency. More so, the taxi drivers belong to the same social category as earlier described and according to the assumptions of the theory, they are likely to have the same level and pattern of understanding in terms of the awareness and uses of the emergency help-lines. Hence, it may be appropriate to explore their adoption of this innovation through the lenses of assumptions of these theories.

### **Method of Study**

This study adopted a qualitative method using the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). According to Krueger (as cited by Delli-Carpini, 1994), focus groups which can be traced to Robert Merton's research on wartime propaganda are “carefully planned discussion[s] designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment” (p.59). Focus groups provide insights into how people think and provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena been studied. The participants may have had shared “experience”- for an example listened to a broadcast, watched a film, or engaged in a task or social interaction. The dynamics of this experience are then systematically analyzed, resulting in a set of tentative hypotheses regarding the impact of the experience on attitudes, opinions, and behaviours. Based on these hypotheses, the researcher develops a discussion guide or protocol designed to explore the subjective experiences of the participants through the focused interviews. (Delli-Carpini, 1994; Kitzinger, 1994) This method has been found appropriate because of the common characteristics of the taxi drivers in the division and the possibility of identifying possible areas of common interest to them on the subject matter.

### **Sampling Size/Technique**

The universal population for this study are taxi drivers in Lagos state. These taxi drivers operate across the five administrative divisions of Lagos state viz: Ikeja Division; Epe Division; Lagos Division; Badagary Division and Ikorodu Division.

However, for this study, the Ikeja administrative division was purposively selected because it is the administrative head of the state. Due to their closeness to the State's administrative centre, it is assumed that taxi drivers operating in this division may be more conversant with information from the state or better still be among the first set of persons to access such information.

The Ikeja Administrative Division comprises eight (8) local governments, which are Agege, Alimosho, Ifako-Ijaye, Ikeja, Kosofe, Mushin, Oshodi-Isolo and Somolu. A simple random sampling technique, using a ballot system was used to select three (3) local government areas from the eight (8) local government areas in the division. The local government areas selected were Agege, Alimosho and Ikeja. A convenience sampling technique was used to select one taxi park each from the three local government areas as follows: Ikeja, Iyana-Ipaja and Agege. Each focus group had seven participants each during the sessions.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis has been expressed qualitatively in line with the research questions. The respondents are all males. The demographic analysis of the participants shows an average age of 53.6 years old ranging between 48-67 years. The respondents' states of origin are: Osun, Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo and Kwara. The average years of experience working as a taxi driver in Lagos state is 26.6 years. Data from the study are presented below.

### **RQ1: What is the level of awareness of emergency help-lines among taxi drivers in the Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state?**

#### ***Awareness of emergency lines***

Awareness generally denotes the level of knowledge about a particular phenomenon. At first, the respondents were asked if they know about the emergency line available in Lagos state. The respondents showed a significant level of awareness that the emergency numbers exist. When asked to state the number in each group, about 4-5 respondents in each group were able to mention at least one of the numbers without pausing or stating and asking for reiteration. Some of

the respondents said they have the numbers saved on their phones while some said because it is only in three digits, they can easily remember.

A participant at the Iyana Ipaja Park said:

I am aware of the numbers. They are 767 and 112. I have used them before and the response was quite prompt when I called. (FGD\_Iyana Ipaja Motor Park, Rep. 4)

Another participant at the Agege Park said:

I know the emergency numbers. The numbers are 112 and 767. They are usually repeated on Lagos traffic radio most times so you cannot miss it. (N/B: Lagos traffic radio is a dedicated radio station established by the Lagos state government to monitor and provide information for commuters in the state to easily navigate their journeys) (FGD\_Agege Motor Park, Rep. 3)

Most of the respondents said they got information about the emergency lines on radio stations that include *Lagos Traffic Radio*, *Faaji Fm*, *Radio Lagos Tiwa n Tiwa* and *Wazobia Fm*. The respondents agreed that all of these stations usually have one form of programme dedicated to addressing issues of transportation within the Lagos metropolis hence the preference noticed during the discussions with the groups.

## **RQ2: Would taxi drivers in the Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state dial emergency lines in an emergency?**

### ***Communication in an emergency***

Communication in emergency generally refers to the steps that would be taken to either gather or disseminate information needed to address and attend to an emergency. Firstly, the drivers were asked if they have ever been in an emergency in the course of their duties. The ratio of individual's exposure to emergency across the three focus groups is 5:6:5. In such emergency, the ratio of those that will first call an emergency number across the three focus group is 4:7:6. The responses show a significant extent to which the respondents would make use of an emergency help-line in an emergency.

A participant at the Ikeja Motor Park noted that:

I have the emergency lines stored on my phone so I do not forget or struggle with it. I have been able to use this number on some occasion particularly when I witness an accident scene that result in very long traffic jam (FGD\_Ikeja Motor Park, Rep. 3).

A participant (Chairman) at Iyana Ipaja Motor Park said that:

I always encourage all the drivers in my park to store the number on their phone. There was a day a robbery was taking place on my route. The emergency number 767 was the first number I called. We all have to park and in about 15 minutes, we heard the siren of the police attached to the Rapid Response Squad arriving at the venue. On another occasion during the protest at Ojota, the emergency number was the first number I called. (FGD\_Iyana Ipaja Motor Park, Rep. 1)

A participant at the Agege Motor Park stated that:

I have called the emergency line on about three occasions. One of them was when the 'boys' (miscreants) barricaded the road around Onipanu (Lagos). I immediately parked at a distance from and first called the emergency line. I called 112. The other time was when the Zenith Bank building at Ijaye was on fire. As I passed and saw it, the emergency line was what first came to my mind. ((FGD\_Agege Motor Park, Rep.6)

A follow up question on the gratification the drivers receive from making the calls shows that the quick response and the cordial response they receive from the emergency call centre agents are part of what gives them satisfaction.

A participant at the Iyana Ipaja Park described his experience thus:

I was very afraid the day I witnessed one ghastly motor accident. However, it was not long that I called that we saw the LASEMA (Lagos State Emergency Management Authority) officials arrived at the scene. I do not know may be other people have called before me but I am very happy with the response of the authority ((FGD\_Iyana Ipaja Motor Park, Rep. 2)

On the cordial response, a participant at the Ikeja Motor Park said:

The call centre agents always try to calm you down. They would repeatedly ask you reassuring questions to ensure you are in the right state of mind and establish some consistency in your communications. May be because the lines are toll free, they are not in any hurry to drop the line but will ask for every necessary detail and they will always say thank you at the end. At least they give you the desired attention. (FGD\_Ikeja Motor Park, Rep. 5)

From the responses, =5 of the respondents will first call an emergency number when they found themselves in an emergency. Thus, it can be inferred that there is a significant rate of adoption of the emergency lines among taxi drivers in Lagos state.

### **RQ3: What factors militate against the use of emergency lines among taxi drivers in the Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state?**

#### ***Militating factors in emergency communication***

The militating factors in emergency communication are exigencies that may affect an effective communication process during an emergency. On this factor, some of the drivers who had used the emergency lines noted that there are occasional congestions, which may require that you dial the numbers more than twice. As an emergency help-line, they feel the number should not be dialed more than twice before it will be answered.

A participant at the Agege Motor Park said:

You know we are drivers and we have our time to beat in terms of transporting our clients to their destinations. Occasionally you may want to quickly make the call while driving or when you briefly pull over. If you do not get the response on time, you may want to move. Again, the passenger in your vehicle may not be that patient to allow you make the call so you may just have to move after trying twice. (FGD\_Agege Motor Park, Rep. 7)

Another participant at the Ikeja Motor Park simply said:

It will be better not to call more than twice before one gets across because sometimes, the emergencies are life threatening and there is need for a quick response. (FGD\_Ikeja Motor Park, Rep. 1)

The drivers also identified insecurity around the emergency scene as another factor that militates how they use the emergency lines. They mentioned that 'area boys' (social miscreants) sometimes target anyone they notice making a call particularly when there is a protest going on. In such situation, the drivers may want to remain safe by not making an emergency call or wait until they move far away from the scene, to a safer place before they make a call. However, they admit that the quest for their own safety first may affect when, how and if they will call the emergency lines to communicate such emergency, because "there is really nothing we can do in that situation" one of them reckoned.

A participant at Iyana Ipaja Motor Park described his experience thus:

Really the government need to help with the curtailing the 'area boys' activities in the metropolis. When there is an emergency like a motor accident, their aim is to steal from the victim. Therefore, when they see anyone at the scene making a call as one may want to park a see how one can be of help to the victim, the area boys become skeptical and harass you. It happened to me twice and I had to lie about whom I was calling so they will not attack me. Even when you have a vehicle breakdown, they will demand money from you and forbid you from making a call. (FGD\_Iyana Ipaja Motor Park, Rep. 1)

A probe into whether the language used in communicating with the emergency call centre agents could be a barrier showed that the language spoken is not a barrier because the call centre agents "usually break down the words".

A participant at Ikeja Motor Park described it thus:

Even when you cannot speak English language, you can communicate in Pidgin or Yoruba language. The agents will answer you (FGD\_Ikeja Motor Park, Rep. 4).

Thus, from the responses, occasional congestion on the emergency lines and the personal safety around the emergency areas form part of the factors that may militate against the emergency communication among the drivers.

## **Discussion**

The creation of the 767 emergency line by the Lagos state government to support the existing 112 created by the Federal government gave residents options to communicate with the emergency response officials in an emergency. Among these are taxi drivers who may be exposed to or frequently encounter emergencies due to the nature of their occupation.

Findings from the study revealed that taxi drivers in the Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state are aware of the two emergency lines available in the state. Most of them became aware by listening to radio programmes particularly the stations that regularly feature programmes, which address transportation issues like Lagos Traffic Radio Fm, Faaji Fm, Wazobia Fm e.t.c

The study further revealed a significant adoption showing a potential tendency that taxi drivers in the division will call the emergency lines in emergency. About five or more of the respondents would at the first instance call, an emergency line in an emergency. They may also communicate in Pidgin English and the Yoruba language (these are common languages spoken by Lagos residents). This high level of awareness and use may be connected to the fact that these set of taxi drivers are closer to the centre of administration in the state. Information flow to them may be faster, as social agents of government are likely to meet with them earlier than those in the other divisions. However, occasional congestion on the emergency lines or communication network issues are some of the challenges militating against an effective use of the emergency lines.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

From this study, it may be concluded that taxi drivers in the Ikeja administrative division of Lagos state are aware of at least one of the emergency lines created by the government to use in an emergency. It may also be concluded that the drivers appreciate the effectiveness and essentials of these lines in tackling emergency issues particularly those that bothers on insecurity. However, the drivers expressed fears about exceptional situations where they may not be able to call the emergency lines for the purpose of personal safety.

In view of these findings, the following are recommended:

1. An expanded study should be conducted among the taxi drivers in other administrative divisions in Lagos and other social categories of Lagos state residents to either establish a correlation or variation with the findings from this study.
2. Since it may be inferred from the study that personal safety is paramount before the drivers can make calls in an emergency, the Lagos state government should beef up security across the metropolis in order for the taxi drivers to always feel secured anywhere they may be to make emergency calls.
3. In terms of occasional emergency help-lines congestion, the concerned Ministries should engage in periodic meetings with partner telecommunication service providers to ensure a smooth access to the emergency lines and probably expand their spectrum.
4. Based on the insight about the significant adoption of the emergency lines among drivers in Lagos state, it is also recommended that other states across Nigeria may adopt the creation of a state emergency help-lines to support the national emergency help-lines in order to bring security governance closer to the people.
5. Finally, an elaborate study may be commissioned at the Federal level to assess knowledge and uses of the emergence help-lines by Nigerians in order to develop data that will serve as references for developing the security and emergency responses in the country.

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