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### GOVERNANCE AND INTER - INTRA PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLITICS IN LAGOS STATE

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**SANNI, RILWAN DAMILOLA**

Department of Political Science,

University of Lagos

Email: [Sannirilwan13@gmail.com](mailto:Sannirilwan13@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8018-2645>

#### Abstract

*Divisions, conflicts, and power struggles are some of the complexities that threaten the effective governance of public urban spaces, especially motor parks in Nigeria. This research explores the changing role of the Lagos Parks and management committee (LASPAC) formally called the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Particular attention is paid to the ways in which political agency is being exercised at different levels (that is, both within the NURTW and the state), the manner in which the Union-State relationship is weaponized by both parties and how the Union is drawn into patronage networks that redistribute resources provided by the state. The study employs the use of qualitative primary data research generated from 13 participants; findings of this research shows that the selfish interest of the political elite in weaponizing the Union led to the changing role of the Union in society to a militant wing.*

Keywords: Motor Parks, Politics, Transport Union, Governance, Lagos State

#### INTRODUCTION

Road transportation business started in Nigeria in the early 1920s by the British colonialists; and by the early 1930s, Nigerian indigenous transporters had become involved in the business (Ajaegbo, 2013). The public transport sector today constitutes one of the greatest employers of labor in the Lagos economy due to its lucrative nature. The impact of public transport can be felt in every aspect of society, which means it cannot be overemphasized. Given the fact that all citizens cannot provide for themselves with means of transportation, it then becomes expedient that the people and the commercial vehicle drivers are necessary partners. This is because a larger fraction of

the working population travels on commercial vehicles daily to and from work while some people equally embark on journeys for recreation, shopping, and other social activities through the same medium (Offiong, 2015).

Following the emergence of Bola Ahmed Tinubu as governor of Lagos state in 1999, he was faced with serious area boys problems which was caused by the structural adjustment program introduced in the military era under Babangida (Gandy, 2006). These boys were able-bodied that dropped out of school to survive on the street and they were engaging in constituting a nuisance in society, to solve this problem, he needed to consolidate his power base which led to

the creation of Local Council Development Area (LCDAs) to absorb these unemployed youths into various state departments and those the system could not absorb later became the foot soldiers of NURTW popularly known as Agbero (Juda Bella, 2023).

The influx of Agbero (motor park touts) into the transportation business encouraged by the Lagos Parks Management Committee (LASPAC) formally known as the National Union of Road Transport Workers Lagos chapter has created an unresolved problem in the transportation sector. Originally Agbero helps to scout for passengers for commercial drivers and carry passengers' luggage. Their major hangouts are bus stops, major highways, and motor parks. Their activities have been seen expanding beyond initial duties to levying tolls on commercial drivers, and motorcyclists, they are at times seen using the word 'owo loading', 'owo olopa' (for police), etc. to brand their extortive act in the system, in the same line, the Agberos are seen as perpetrators of violence in most parts of Lagos, thereby serving as a pool from where a complement of individuals with technical skills in violence are recruited (Omobowale & Fayiga, 2017). Although, there are several causes of their violent act, which vary from politics of inter and intra-union rivalries, political patronage, disagreement over fare hikes, etc. (Abe, 2017).

However, the rise in the unrestraint activities of the Agberos a non-state actor has made the political climate in Lagos very dangerous. In the just concluded 2023 election, MC Oluomo (Lagos State Parks Management Committee Chairman) a disciple of Tinubu publically threatened the Lagos state electorate to stay home if not voting for the All Progressive Congress in the gubernatorial election or ready to be dealt with by the union land army (Sahara reporters march 17, 2023).

Subsequently, Lagos state, known as the center of excellence is gradually degenerating into a crime-leading state controlled by Agberos.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### UNIONISM IN THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM

For commercial drivers to impact society and aggregate members' interests, they need to occupy a significant segment of the economy. This subsequently led to the formation of a union in 1934, the Nigerian Road Transport Union. They had offices in cities across Nigeria (Oladipo, 2012). This operation was considered a new development because it was unprecedented. Through their contribution to the economy, commercial transporters went beyond recruitment and transport services but helped the government generate revenue by paying various fees like hackney permits, driver's licenses, vehicle licenses, vehicle plate numbers, and insurance, etc. also, in the 1930s, the union fought the colonial government on imposing higher duties on vehicles where they noticed they were competing with the railways Oshin, 1990 in (Oladipo, 2012).

However, in 1978, there was a significant change in the transport system as the Nigerian Road Transport Union was replaced by the National Union of Road Transport Workers, commonly known as NURTW. From this date, the activities of public transport drivers have been regulated by this body/organization. Though it's important to note that, before NURTW there was the Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) but it was less active and popular than NURTW (Oladipo, 2012). The two unions serve as subsidiaries of Central Labour Organisation (CLO) presently known as the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). NURTW membership is well defined as people (mainly men) involved in the use of various modes of

transportation such as motorcycles (Okada), buses, taxis, and tricycles (Napep) to transport goods and passengers from one location to another other which made it boast of over 2 million members in the whole federation (ITF, 2023). This union serves as the organizing and negotiating body for members and helps to create conducive working conditions for members, especially the female gender, to avoid discrimination or harassment (Fourchard, 2021).

The Road transport workers form an administrative structure to manage union affairs. Oladipo in his book stressed that “Union Secretariats was established in Units, Departments, Zones, and States. Each of these has elected secretaries and officers headed by a chairman who coordinates the activities of the transport union across the federation, including the FCT. Every state secretariat has up to ten to twenty elected members which include the Secretary of State and several other staffers, whose efforts help coordinate the day-to-day activities of the local chapters under the jurisdiction of each State Council (Oladipo, 2012).

However, the influx of street urchins popularly refers to as Agbero into the transport system encouraged by the NURTW altered their conduct (Daniel, 2009). This started in 1986, when the then military President of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida introduced an economic policy, the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) with support from the International Monetary Fund during the oil doom (Don & Ike, 1988). The main objective of the SAP was to diversify the economy instead of relying solely on oil revenue. The government couldn't achieve all set goals for economy and this led to a steady rise in inflation, growing income inequality, and increasing prices on various consumer goods (Abah, 2016). In other to search for greener pastures, Lagos became the target of most young boys

and girls and those who were not employable started as area boys and subsequently found their way into the NURTW Agbero due to their roughness and fearsome act (Fourchard, 2021). Agbero is a Yoruba word coined from Agba and Ero meaning receiver of commuters. Initially, Agbero help the drivers to scout for passengers and in turn, get compensation fees which help sustain them daily but they have developed to levying various taxes on drivers ranging from owo ero, owo loading,(Loading fee) owo olode (security fee), owo baaale, owo olopa, etc, which is a form of exploitation (Omobiwale & Olutayo, 2010).

### **NURTW AND REVENUE GENERATION**

Local government councils in Nigeria have been required by law to set, maintain and collect parking fees since the 1950s (Fourchard, 2021). However, under the Second Republic, the control and management of car parks and bus stops, particularly in Lagos, became the epicenter of political antagonism when transport unions took over their management. It was during this period, the Agberos were instrumentally mobilized and incorporated into the union as tax collectors.

Public transport is dominated by privately owned minibuses known as danfos. Daily revenue is collected by the land army of this union popularly called Agbero. The fearsome and rough appearance of the Agbero symbolically presents a ruthless agent who ensure daily payment of dues from the operators of public busses, Tricycle (Keke Napep), and Okada in compliance with the instructions of the leadership of the Lagos Parks Management Committee chairman (LASPAC) formally National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) without fail (Omobowale & Fayiga, 2017). Lagos Agbero operates in a place they call “pit” known as motor park/bus stop. This Agbero issue ticket

contains various amounts to be paid by the commercial drivers at the motor parks.(Odinaka Anudu, 2021)

### **POLITICS OF SUCCESSION WITHIN COMMERCIAL VEHICLE DRIVERS**

Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) along with the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) are legally registered body to organise the conduct of Nigeria public transport system under the Trade Union Act of No. 22 of 1978 (NWLR, 1992). Both unions are also guided by their rights recognized in the Nigerian constitution, which they both use in their daily work. These laws clearly set out how unions should be run, including the mandate of officers and the succession process. This plays out in their law on how to emerge a leader and tenure of office which their constitution stipulates NURTW (2008).

In a study by Nwagwu (2014), Alhaji Muhammed Musa became President of the Road Transport Employers Association (RTEAN), a Lagos State branch, on Friday 31 October 2014. Musa's victory follows peaceful and hard-fought elections by other anti-unification candidates. Nwagwu also reported that four candidates ran for branch chairman, including Musa, the chairman of Lagos State RTEAN Guardian Committee. However, there is ample other evidence that drivers' union members have disregarded their rights in leadership succession processes. This resulted in several deaths and property damage, re-defining drivers' unions as violent groups. Violent conflict could be caused by leadership tussle among drivers at anytime and anywhere globally (Quintal and Raborife 2015). However, this can be confirmed in a case of Gauteng South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) Secretary Chris Nkosi that was shot dead in Johannesburg on April 13, 2015 (Samson, n.d.). It was further said to be linked to the 2016 congress of

the drivers' organisation in South Africa. It was further reported that the union had been embroiled in major bloody violence in recent months over suspected involvement in a bitter struggle for control of the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) (Quintal and Raborife 2015).

According to Feyi Afisunla (2013), Oyo State NURTW was rioted by the Interim Executive Committee (TEC) following the death of Vice Chairman Kamorudeen Beyioku from gunshot wounds. According to daily post, the reason for this was said to be relating to the three-year struggle for leadership of the union. It was added that the row erupted after the union's state executive, led by Lateef Akinsola, was fired by state governor Alao Akala. The findings said that Akinsola, who had been sacked as union chairman, was suspected of murder and was under police surveillance (Feyi A. 2013).

In Kayode Adedeji (2016) enquiry, it was researched that the struggle for leadership within the drivers' union can take many forms of conflict, including kidnapping and other forms of dangerous social harm. It emerged that an alleged power struggle within Ogun State RTEAN allegedly led to the kidnapping of Olayinka Oshinkoya, a former union secretary. While this allegation was dismissed by the union's National Council, there was a strong suspicion that it was related to a dispute within the union. These studies clearly demonstrate the prevalence of violent conflict in succession politics among members of drivers' unions around the world. Therefore, it has been observed that the two major drivers' unions are known for engaging in violence and militancy amongst themselves in relation to politics of succession in the motor parks (Kayode A 2016).

Omobowale and Fayigba believed that union's chairmen achieved their positions not only through free and fair elections, but also through their ability to use force. The interesting thing about all of this is that they all agree on the cause of the succession dispute among the drivers, which they all attribute to political interference by the state and politicians, which they wanted to use to their advantage; with the exception of the SATAWU case in South Africa and the RTEAN report in Ogun State, where there is no evidence of outside influence (Omobowale & Fayiga, 2017).

### **UNHEALTHY RIVALRY AMONG DRIVERS' UNION (NURTW AND RTEAN)**

Each park must accommodate members of NURTW and RTEAN. However, the two union drivers; NURTW and RTEAN are always at loggerheads. Evidence showed that the two drivers' unions are mostly involved in disputes over fleet ownership or loading rights. Given the unhealthy rivalry between the two unions, drivers from different unions tend to injure one another after avoidable altercations (Abiodun A, 2014). His further explanation was seen in a clash between NURTW and RTEAN in Ondo State, which injured several drivers and destroyed several properties. It was added that the police report on the clash said eleven people were questioned about the clash. In the writer's conclusion, he further said that RTEAN's Amadu Jamiu claimed that NURTW's Abdullahi Olawale tricked other thugs into attacking him. The clash was the result of a rivalry between the two unions. The results also showed that Amadu Jamiu and his colleagues who were attacked left NURTW for RTEAN. Amadu actually said he was attacked for leaving NURTW (Olufemi, 2014).

National Union of Road Transport Workers has threatened to block the Road Transport Employee

Association of Nigeria in Nsukka, Enugu State. The study found that the union protested the collection of revenue by RTEAN in the state. Headliner added that police intervention prevented the protest from turning into a bloody tier between the two drivers' unions. Also,, Nsukka Commercial Bus and Shuttle Drivers chairman Chika Ozioko revealed in that its members had unanimously rejected RTEAN membership because they belonged to NURTW, the body that regulates and controls driver activities in the country. He was quoted to have said "we, drivers in Nsukka town and its environs, say no to the membership of RTEAN". Headliner further reported that the chairman insisted they will resist anybody who forces them into belonging to an association that they had nothing to benefit from. The report indicated that some drivers consider RTEAN as illegal body because the State chairman of NURTW pronounced it so. Meanwhile, the two unions were created by the law under the trade union act of 1979 in Nigeria (Headliner 2016).

Ogunyemi, 2021, three people were killed and several others seriously injured in clashes between two factions of transport unions between Wednesday night and Thursday in the Mile 2 area of Lagos state. Park between members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) and the Nigerian Transport Employers Association by Road (RTEAN) in the state. It was also found that the two unions were engaged in a longstanding dispute over toll collection for truck drivers in the state's Apapa section. The clash was the second in less than a week when fifteen people suspected of belonging to RTEAN were killed on Tuesday at Tin Can First Gate and Fatgbems in Apapa by gunmen suspected of belonging to a rival union group (NURTW).

In line with the above explanation, Ola Ajayi (2016) also reported that Ibadan is unsettled due to the clash between members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers, NURTW, and the Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria, RTEAN, in the Ibadan metropolitan area, the two rival associations engaged in shootings on Iwo Road over who should be in control of morto parks and fees collection which led to injuries on both sides.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Almond's ingenious innovation was to define an approach to understanding political systems that takes into account not only their structural elements (the institutions) but also their functions (Akinyetun & Shola, n.d.). The model of structural functionalism posit that institutions of a state includes executive, legislator and judiciary but not limited to this as it extends to political parties, interest groups, bureaucracy etc. Almond was of the opinion that when these institutions are studies then we can understand how each state functions and by extension we can compare in looking at how same institutions functions differently in different countries (Forsyth & Copes, 2014).

In an attempt to achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher decided to rely on the principles of the structural functionalism theory. This is consequent upon the perception that the problems being investigated is about functions of the institutions within political system. The researcher agrees that if various institutions perform their duties diligently without being compromised, the society will be at equilibrium. However, in an attempt by political leaders to sustain their control over resources and power, they have been seen patronizing the transport union which subsequently result to digression from their core

functions in the society and having political affiliation by engaging in various activities lay down by their political gods, i.e. snatching of ballot papers, electoral violence, political campaign, assassination of their political opponent etc. the political lords then compensate them by giving them authority to control parks which leads to various forms of extortion, inter and intra union conflicts etc. (Omobiwale & Olutayo, 2010).

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative method will be used in this research, qualitative research which is used to uncover trends of thoughts and opinion and also dives deeper into the problem. This method varies from structured to semi-structured techniques some of which include focus group discussion and interviews. Interviews will be used in this research.

The research will make use of both primary and secondary data, the primary source of data is firsthand information from the source, such data are usually obtained from the field through interviews, questionnaires, surveys, or recording of an official transaction while the secondary source of data would be obtained from review of related literature, in other words, the consulted published and unpublished works, journal, newspapers, magazines, and seminar collections relating to the study.

The sampling technique to be used in this research is purposive sampling and the respondent will be chosen based on their expertise and experience on the research topic, a sample population of thirteen (13) respondents will be selected and interviewed to represent the population.

The data will be analyzed using content analysis, which is the analysis of information collected by the researcher in a planned order to be able to come up with

relevant conclusions and recommendations about the event under study to establish trends.

## COLLECTION OF DATA

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

The results of this qualitative study are based on interviews with a total of thirteen participants, all of whom voluntarily participated in the study.

| PARTICIPANT | JOB TITLE                                                                                                           | LOCATION       | GENDER          |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| A           | LAGOS PARKS AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (FORMALLY NURTW), CHAIRMAN AND HIS BOYS (FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW OF TEN MEMBERS) | SHOMOLU BRANCH | MALE AND FEMALE |
| B           | LAGOS PARKS AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (LASPAC), CHAIRMAN                                                             | IJEGUN BRANCH  | MALE            |
| C           | SENIOR LECTURER                                                                                                     | UNILAG         | MALE            |
| D           | LECTURER                                                                                                            | UNILAG         | MALE            |

### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND LAGOS PARKS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (LASPAC)

Research question (1): What is the relationship between the local government and the Lagos parks management committee?

Respondents have various views on the relationship that exists between the local government and Lagos Parks and Management Committee, some believe they are the establishment of government who serve as government sub-workers at the grassroots level in regulating the public transport business in line with local government rules. Some believe they are an integral part of the Lagos state economy as they help in tax collection for the government. Some believe there exists a patron-client relationship as an instrument of exploitation and oppression in society leading to weak, illicit, and anti-people relationships. Some also believe is for both parties' political selfish gain in the society as it answers to who gets what, when, and how.

These transcripts are the opinions of the participants

Participant A who is a prominent personality in Shomolu Lagos Parks and Management Committee (LASPAC) along with his boys in a Focus Group Discussion explained the relationship that exists between the government and LASPAC, in their words, one respondent said "The committee is a government establishment to collect tax for the government, this is done in form of ticket collection at various parks, although the ticket is divided into two (2) categories, one(1) from local government and the other one is from the union itself. The one from the local government serves various purposes, ranging from the commercial drivers (the committee) monthly tax, Lagos Waste, and Management agent (LAWMA) fee, Security and the ticket being generated by the Union itself goes to their private coffer that was not stated." This means that, despite claiming to be government workers, they operate differently as against a formal organization

operating as the employer determines the payment of the employee but in this scenario, the employee (Lagos Parks and Management committee) determines how much they want to be paid which varies daily. One of his boys in his words: “Government is our Oga (Leader), our relationship is like employee and employer” This explains that they live for the government. Another respondent from the Focused Group Discussion: “Government and our Union related because we register under them (government) and we collect tax for them, meaning we contribute to the state economy” This participant explained that the union generates revenue which government uses for developmental purposes. Another participant in the Focused Group Discussion explained that: “This relationship is not always rosy as it leads to personality clash in the union and intra conflict” This participant explained that as their relationship is based on pros and cons.

Participant B who is also a prominent personality in the Ijegan Lagos Parks and Management Committee said “Just like the other organization that serves whichever person that occupies a managerial position in the company, government registered us, gave us various garages we operate, we generate tax for the government which is the ticket you see our boys giving commercial drivers at various garages, though it’s of two (2) categories, one from the government which covers our tax, lawman fee, the local government we operate fee which they use in developing our parks from roads to other things that concern parks. That’s the relationship we have with government.” This shows that out of about 10 daily tickets being issued by the Lagos Parks and management committee daily only 4 tickets are from the local government and the larger park goes to the personal coffers of the Union (LASPAC).

Participant C who is a senior lecturer at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) explained their relationship in his words “It’s like a weak relationship between government and citizen, this transcends to series of impunity on the side of the Lagos Parks and Management Committee because the government use them as willing tools of intimidation and harassment into doing what the government wants, they are also an avenue through which the government milk the people as it entails illicit extortion that doesn’t go into the general coffers of the government. It is a channel for extortion for their selfish purposes. With this I will say the relationship is weak and anti-people” He sees it as a patron-client relationship based on externalism and an avenue to advance selfish interests at the detriment of others.

Participant D who is also a Lecturer at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) explained their relationship in his words thus: “Basically what exists between them is politics, in politics you need foot soldiers and the Union (NURTW/LASPAC) serves as a body that they recruit their foot soldiers, who in turn get some benefit from the political elites” in his view, he sees their relationship as a patron-client relationship where the patron in his dispensation of favors or rewards such as public office, jobs, contracts, subsidies, prestige or other valued benefits by a patron (who controls their dispensation) to a client (Bamidele & Ake, 2017). The client in return, pays back with valued services of providing his political godfather the needed support.

Also, participant D further explains how this relationship leads to an internal crisis in the Union. In his words, he added that “this leads to inter and intra conflict in the Union because they have modus operandi being tampered with by the political elite which might lead to a factional clash of interest that

may emerge due to the interference resulting to violence in achieving their aims” this tallies with the previous respondent stand that government interference in Lagos parks and management committee affairs may not align with the interest of some members degenerating to inter and intra violence among the union. In the same line, respondent C in his words buttressed that “Since their illicit relationship is to serve the selfish end of both sides there will be struggling for power within the union to enjoy the favor from the political elite and this comes with violence and internal divisions that subsequently leads to breaking down of laws in the society”.

#### **IMPLICATION OF THE ACCOMMODATIONIST POLICY OF GOVERNMENT.**

Research question three (2): What is the implication of the accommodationist policy of government?

In responding to this, participants expressed their views in various ways. According to Participant C in his words: “The predatory political class who wants to achieve his political will, by engaging in predatory policies that seem to be beneficial to a minority rather than the majority, this has made the union convey an unruly and rascally image of Lagos state. Also, this can be seen in the huge sum of money being collected by this group, if were to be a positive and development-minded government, the informal association constitutes a very large number of people that which government can harness to positive ends but they won’t because they have negative/selfish agenda which includes harassment of voters, snatching of ballot boxes, constituting violence against their political opponents. This then makes the money generated in that sector to service their political ambition and the

rest goes to the coffers of their instrument of destruction.”

*Participant C ends his views that: As far as I’m concerned the accommodating policy contributes a terrible nuisance value as it has to do with the image of Lagos state, as it has to do with peace and tranquility of Lagos residents, as it has to do with political processes, as it has to do with fairness and equity and as it has to do with a sense of good living in Lagos state.*

*Participant D, in his expression, noted that Lagos state politics under Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration in 1999 till the present moment engaged in accommodating the Union which is tagged “let the boys also eat” he claimed not to know the amount being generated but was certain that they remit some amount to the government coffers. In his words: “They maintain the Lagos parks and management committee at the societal expense, this leads to insecurity in the society and siphoning off taxpayers money, the parks and management committee determines transport fares in various areas of the state leaving transportation prices fluctuating and making life unbearable to commuters without the government restraining them”.*

Also, in Participant A’s explanation, he said: “The interest on the part of Union leaders trying to seek the support of the political elite only leads to a crisis within the union and this affects the society because whenever we are at war, anywhere we operate will be affected making the area a red zone till peace is restored” this participant explained that, the accommodating policy birth the violence emanating from the union which affects the society at large. Aside from the general views of society, another member of this focus group explained that it has led to a positive impact on the association, in his words: “We are now bigger than before as we now contribute to politics and people only

don't see us as a pauper but a reputable group of people that people want to associate with" this respondent explained that the accommodating politics has led to a rapid development in the Union and people want to connect with them. He furthered his explanation by stating some names "Look at MC Oluomo, Kunle Poly, late Saka Saola, etc, people always want to mingle with them because they are big names".

Participant C also noted that the accommodationist policy plays out in government aligning with the Lagos Parks and management committee (LASPAC) as against the RTEAN. In his words: "The RTEAN predates the NURTW now Lagos Parks and Management Committee in Lagos. To a reasonable extent people in RTEAN are more mature, learned, and well-behaved than their counterpart, this has relegated them to second-class association in the Lagos public transport business because they don't have the populace that can unleash mayhem as the state political class will want. To this extent in the struggle for political power, politicians tend to wine and dine with the ruthless set that can dehumanize and carry out the violence needed in the society".

*Participant D buttresses his explanation, in his words: "The NURTW now Lagos Parks and Management Committee, has been able to leverage the government which has made them more powerful and somehow beyond the control of the government as they engage in unpleasant and unrestraint act that constitute nuisance in the society leading to security threat in the state".*

### **SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLITICS IN LAGOS**

Research question three (3): How can the problem of public transport politics be resolved in Lagos?

The constant patronage by politicians and political affiliations of NURTW members has made the body

digress from their initial duty to partaking in several unrestricted activities in the public transport system. However, the participant proffered solutions on how this can be resolved.

Participant D in his words: "The solution is more of Lagos state government upholding the principle of rule of law". This participant noted that when the law is supreme and everyone knows engaging in unlawful acts attracts punishment. I.e. siphoning of public funds, threatening state security, truncating the electoral due processes, etc. such individuals should be brought to book. You can't keep them out of politics because it's everybody's right and politics isn't meant for angels. They do politics to articulate their interest and those in government see them as being useful but the government should ensure the law prevails and never compromised for any selfish interest" The participant believed that once the public is aware that no matter whom you support in election or claim to be your godfather, once you act in a way that contradicts the law, you will bear the consequence, this will scare them away from engaging in the illicit act and be more modest in their daily conduct.

*Participant C gave two (2) solutions. in his words: "If there is a sincere and positive-minded political class, definitely that is what they will work for because the government will harness the potential of those people and create a very informal employment sector for them that will ensure all their activities is channel towards the development of the public transport business and the state at large" the participant looked into the regulation of their activities as being poor and knowing the union has positive purposes to fulfill if being properly managed by the government as it has to do with development, he noted that even if the money they generate goes into the reconstruction of roads, etc.*

rather than going into the private coffers for selfish use people will accord them more respect and see them as being a responsible group. Also, participant C gave another solution. In his words: “government should detach them from partisan politics as it has to do with using them as political thugs, agents of mayhem, intimidating and disenfranchising the people”. He continued that if these are done “it will add color to the positive virtues of government, it will add to the positive achievement of the government, and people will start developing trust and confidence in government for ensuring peace and tranquility of the society”

Participant B's resolution on how to resolve this problem was explained in his words: “We the members of Lagos Parks and Management Committee are the same members and structures that existed in the days of NURTW in Lagos and we have a constitution we are to follow which is to guide our conduct but has been compromised for selfish reasons” this participant, explained that if the constitutions were to be adhered to strictly there won't be an issue of politicization because it's not their duty to participate in partisan politics at the expense of the union. He also explained that “the constitutions state how a leader should emerge and not imposing it on them by the state government” The respondent furthered his explanation of differences between their workers and street urchins. In his words: “Agbero that collect tax for us dress in green and white but there are other people who operate at parks without the dressing and we are unable to stop them because they claim to be ‘Omo Onile’ (those who own land), this are the people who constitute a nuisance and if the government can assist in flushing them out of the system, society will see a positive change at various parks”

Participant A also gave their views on how to resolve the issue, in one of the participant's words: “Government will be the one to play the major role because they have a greater influence and we are to support the government in power of the state we operate to ensure our relevance, if government allow us to operate without interfering you can't see us engaging in those illicit acts people tag us with” this respondent explained the issue of 2019 that MC Oluomo was stabbed at APC rally, he said although it was done by the union member this was what politicians caused because political leaders weaponized them for their selfish use. Another participant supported this position in his words “We are not thugs, once the government stops buying us all will go well” Another one said that: “If we go against the government, we will be punished and this has led to individuals in the association pursuing a selfish interest to be at the mercy of government” In their position, it only shows that the government has the larger share in ensuring development, peace, and tranquility in the state. And to foster this, the accommodationist policy must be terminated.

## DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

According to the answers of the respondents, there are different reasons government and Lagos Parks and Management Committee engage in patron client relationship. The most popular reason is actually that political elites want to consolidate their power base, this is in line with the positions of Omobowale and Fayingba that union's chairmen attained their positions not only in a democratic way which implies free and fair election but also through the use of force and attributed to political interference by the state and politicians, which they wanted to use to their advantage (Omobowale & Fayiga, 2017). This is in line with the

participant's position on the public transport union politics of succession, Participants believed that political elites impose their candidate on the Union thereby reducing them to a mere political tool in the hands of the ruling class in Lagos. Other reasons have been talked about like the perspective of the Lagos Parks and Management Committee (LASPAC) on the issue of wanting to play a clientele role due to the benefits it gets from the patron. In Osumah's explanation of Patron-client as a relationship between an individual that has wealth, influence, and other personal resources and the other person (client) who benefits from this (Osumah, 2007). The benefit the Lagos parks and management leaders get from the political elites varies but most of them are autonomy of parks in Lagos state which they generate a huge tax of 123 billion annually (Odinaka Anudu, 2021) and remits little percentage to the government coffer (Aigbe & Justin-Ugo, 2018).

However, solutions were proposed by the participant which is the state upholding principles of the rule of law through her law enforcement agency, This is in line with the position of (Scott, 2019) noting that when all citizens obey the law and offenders are punished, taxpayers' money is used in servicing various political selfish interest will be addressed and politicians won't use members of LASPAC as the instrument of violence in the society and subsequently such punishment will serve as a deterrent to others who might want to engage in unruly behavior as explained in (Ekiyor & Mashumba, 2006).

## CONCLUSION

In the researcher's conclusion, politicians engage the street urchins who are pooled from LASPAC to consolidate their power base during elections by interfering in the governance of motor parks that they

even install drivers' leaders against the wish of the union members. In addition, the police who are supposed enforcement agency have also compromised on their responsibility in favor of the state. With this being said, the Union acts like lords.

Another major conclusion by the researcher is that the political elites play dangerous politics with the motor parks to the detriment of societal well-being. The political patronage of this Union in Lagos has degenerated into several issues affecting the Union and society at large, ranging from conflict emanating from politics of succession in the motor parks, inter and intra drivers' rivalries, fare hikes, etc. subsequently, the unrestraint act poses a threat to the security of Lagos state.

## RECOMMENDATION

The public transport sector should be reformed to transform it from its illicit nature to a peaceful business. This is in line with the position of Cole (2005) that group or organizational conflict is unproductive and possibly destructive this means that when there is an enabling or peaceful environment for business to thrive, this is to the advantage of public transport drivers, the people and the state at large.

Secondly, the public transport environment, especially Motor Parks, should be strictly governed and decrease from weaponizing by the State to prevent it from being a militant wing who are believed to provide sources of intimidation of ugly dispositions by unsuspecting transportation workers in the motor park.

Members of the LASPAC should be subjected to training that will transform the Union to a more productive standard and new members should be trained before being admitted to be well informed on their Dos and Don'ts.

Motor Parks should not be a source of accommodation for homeless individuals or urchins. Only motor park security men should be allowed to be in the park overnight.

In addition, law enforcement agencies, most especially the police force should live up to their responsibilities by resisting the political elite from influencing them against the people they are constitutionally saddled to protect. The policemen should not be involved in partisan politics under whatever guise.

Lastly, technology should be introduced in the daily conduct of the Union, though they once did data capturing which is to know the total number of their members. They should have a database that entails all information about their members. All staff should wear uniform carrying their names and code for easy identification and there should be a hotline they can report their illicit behavior.

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