EXPLORING PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICE QUALITY: A CASE OF MINI BUS SERVICE IN OYO TOWN

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Abstract
This study examines the quality of mini-bus public transport services in Oyo Town, Nigeria, and their impact on urban mobility. Public transport is critical for sustainable urban mobility, yet challenges such as outdated vehicles, unreliable schedules, overcrowding, and limited accessibility hinder its effectiveness in developing countries. A descriptive survey design was used to collect data from 200 passengers, 40 mini-bus operators, and five transport officials through questionnaires, interviews, and field observations. Findings reveal that while mini-buses provide affordable fares and adequate route coverage (65%), significant challenges exist in timeliness, safety, and comfort. Over 80% of the vehicle fleet is over 10 years old, with 50% in poor maintenance condition, resulting in frequent delays and discomfort for passengers. Passenger satisfaction is highest for affordability (70%) but lowest for comfort (30%) and timeliness (40%). A moderate to strong correlation was found between service quality attributes like route coverage and urban mobility, underscoring the importance of improving these services for better travel experiences. Recommendations include upgrading vehicle fleets, enhancing schedules, expanding route coverage, enforcing safety regulations, and leveraging technology for tracking and monitoring services. These improvements aim to reduce travel times, enhance service reliability, and promote inclusive urban mobility.This study highlights the critical role of mini-bus services in facilitating urban mobility in Oyo Town and emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to improve service quality and passenger satisfaction.

Keywords: Public transport, mini-bus services, urban mobility, service quality, passenger satisfaction, timeliness, affordability/

Introduction

Public transport systems across the globe play an essential role in ensuring sustainable urban mobility. Effective public transport reduces traffic congestion, decreases environmental pollution, and provides equitable access to mobility (Bibri & Krogstie, 2020). According to a study by Ang et al. (2022), public transportation systems enhance economic productivity by ensuring the efficient movement of people and goods in cities. Cities like London, Singapore, and New York have implemented various strategies to improve the quality of public transport services, including integrating modern technology such as digital ticketing and real-time passenger information systems. The quality of public transport services is often evaluated based on a range of key performance indicators (KPIs), including reliability, safety, punctuality, comfort, and affordability. For instance, a study by Vasylieva and Kolosok (2019) highlighted that reliability and comfort were among the most significant factors that influenced customer satisfaction in Italy's public transport systems. Furthermore, improved transport infrastructure and smart

technologies have significantly enhanced service quality in developed countries. However, public transport quality is a challenge in many developing countries due to inadequate infrastructure, outdated vehicles, and poor maintenance practices.

Minibus services, in particular, are commonly used in developing regions, filling the gap between formal bus services and private vehicles. However, they are often criticized for lacking proper regulation, poor safety standards, and limited investment in maintenance. A study by Govender (2016) in South Africa found that minibus taxi services, although widely used, were marred by issues such as overloading, reckless driving, and a lack of formalized governance structures. The situation is no different across other developing regions where minibuses dominate urban public transport.

Many African cities are experiencing rapid population growth, leading to increased demand for public transport services. However, the growth in public transport infrastructure has not kept pace with the population increase. According to AfDB (2014), African cities face significant transport challenges, including outdated infrastructure, inadequate funding, and a lack of skilled labor for maintaining transport systems. These issues are compounded by the poor condition of vehicles used in public transport, particularly minibuses, which are often old and not regularly serviced.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, faces significant public transport challenges, particularly in urban centers like Lagos, Abuja, and Ibadan. Over 60% of Nigeria's urban population relies on public transport for their daily commutes, yet the public transport sector remains largely informal. The mini bus service, commonly known as danfo in Lagos, korope in Oyo and other major cities, is a critical component of Nigeria's public transport system. These minibuses provide an affordable means of transportation, particularly for low-income residents (Nwaedozie et al., 2023).

Oyo Town, located in southwestern Nigeria, is a fast-growing urban area facing increasing demand for efficient public transport services.

As in other parts of Nigeria, minibuses are the predominant mode of public transport in Oyo Town, catering to both urban and peri-urban populations. Despite their importance, the mini bus services in Oyo Town suffer from similar issues as seen in other Nigerian cities, including poor service quality, traffic congestion, and inadequate infrastructure.

Literature Review

Public transport remains a critical component of urban mobility, particularly in developing countries, where it facilitates economic activities and enhances social inclusion. The service quality of public transport systems, especially informal systems like mini-buses, has garnered attention in recent years due to its impact on commuter satisfaction and overall urban transportation efficiency. The concept of public transport service quality generally revolves around how well a service meets user expectations, with dimensions such as reliability, safety, comfort, affordability, and accessibility being widely studied. Scholars like Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL model, which has been adapted to assess transport systems by applying its five service quality dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. More recent studies, such as those by Ojo et al. (2020), emphasize the need to localize these frameworks to address region-specific challenges, especially in countries like Nigeria where mini-bus services dominate urban transit.

In developing countries, the challenges facing public transport are multifaceted. Mini-bus services, which are a predominant mode of transportation in cities like Oyo Town, struggle with issues such as poor infrastructure, overcrowding, irregular schedules, and safety concerns. Research by Olawole and Aloba (2019) highlights the informal nature of these services, which, while offering flexibility in routes and affordability, often suffer from operational inefficiencies and lack of regulation. Similarly, Ayodele et al. (2021) observe that

mini-bus operators in Nigerian towns prioritize profit over service quality, leading to practices like overloading, neglect of vehicle maintenance, and unsafe driving behavior. These issues not only reduce commuter satisfaction but also pose significant risks to public safety.

Measuring public transport service quality has evolved over the years, with researchers adopting user-centric approaches to capture passenger perceptions. Eboli and Mazzulla (2007) developed a framework emphasizing reliability, comfort, safety, affordability, and accessibility as core dimensions of public transport service quality. More recent studies, such as Adeleke et al. (2022), have expanded on these metrics to include environmental sustainability and digital accessibility, highlighting the changing priorities of urban commuters. In the context of mini-bus services in Oyo Town, reliability and affordability are often prioritized by users due to the economic challenges faced by many residents. However, comfort and safety remain critical areas where these services fall short, as reported by Akinyemi and Olukayode (2019).

Mini-bus services in Nigeria operate within an informal transport system that has thrived due to the inadequacy of formal public transport infrastructure. While these services are widely used because of their availability and low fares, they are plagued by challenges such as traffic congestion, poor vehicle conditions, and a lack of professional standards among operators. According to Oyesiku and Odufuwa (2021), mini-buses often operate without fixed schedules or designated stops, making them unpredictable and less reliable compared to formal transport systems. The absence of effective regulatory frameworks has allowed these inefficiencies to persist, affecting the overall quality of service provided to commuters.

User satisfaction with public transport systems is a key indicator of service quality. Studies like that of Dell'Olio et al. (2011) have shown that passengers value attributes such as punctuality, affordability, and comfort. In Nigerian towns, however, affordability often outweighs other factors due to the low-income levels of most users. Research by Adewuyi et al. (2021) found that while mini-bus users in Oyo Town appreciate the low fares, they frequently express dissatisfaction with safety and reliability. This dissatisfaction is compounded by issues such as reckless driving, overcrowding, and poor vehicle maintenance, which negatively affect the overall commuting experience.

Policy interventions and regulatory frameworks play a crucial role in improving the quality of public transport services. Governments and transport authorities can address the challenges facing mini-bus services through measures such as enforcing stricter safety regulations, providing subsidies for vehicle modernization, and developing dedicated infrastructure like bus terminals and lanes. Recent examples from other developing countries provide valuable insights. For instance, South Africa's introduction of driver training programs and standardized fares has improved the reliability of mini-bus services (Nkosi et al., 2019). Similarly, Kenya has leveraged digital platforms such as mobile apps to enhance route transparency and improve commuter experiences (Mutua and Kimani, 2020). These case studies highlight the potential for innovation and policy reform to address the challenges facing mini-bus services in Oyo Town.

In conclusion, the literature underscores the significant role of mini-bus services in facilitating urban mobility in Oyo Town, despite their numerous challenges. Improving service quality requires a multifaceted approach that includes user-focused assessments, regulatory enforcement, and infrastructure development. Lessons from global best practices, combined with localized research and stakeholder sport

engagement, can help transform mini-bus services into a more reliable and sustainable mode of public transport. Future studies should focus on integrating user feedback into policymaking and exploring the potential of technology-driven solutions to address service quality gaps in informal transport systems.

Methodology

The research methodology outlines the systematic approach used to investigate the quality of mini-bus services in Oyo Town. It describes the research design, population, sampling technique, data collection methods, validation, reliability, and data analysis procedures. The methodology ensures that the study is structured to provide reliable and valid insights into the research objectives.

This study adopted a descriptive survey design, which is appropriate for gathering opinions and perceptions from a representative sample of the population. Questionnaires were used as the primary data collection tool, as they allow for the collection of standardized responses from both passengers and mini-bus operators. According to Nworgu (2003), survey research involves studying a subset of a population to make generalizations about the whole, making this design suitable for understanding public transport service quality in Oyo Town.

The population of the study comprised three groups: mini-bus operators, passengers, and transport authorities. A total of 40 mini-bus operators were selected to provide insights into operational challenges and service quality. Additionally, 200 passengers were randomly selected from major motor parks in four Local Government Areas (LGAs): Sabo Motor Park (Atiba LGA), Akesan Motor Park (Oyo West LGA), Owode Motor Park (Oyo East LGA), and OjaOke (Afijio LGA). Five officials each from transport regulatory agencies, including the Oyo State Road Traffic Management Agency (OYTMA), ral

Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Vehicle Inspection Office (VIO), and the Nigeria Police Force (Traffic Division), were purposively sampled to provide insights into policy and regulatory issues. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure that the sample adequately represented the diverse population.

Data collection relied on both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and field observations. Questionnaires captured passenger satisfaction, operational challenges, and demographic details, while interviews with transport officials explored regulatory frameworks and potential policy interventions. Field observations at major bus stops provided contextual insights into traffic conditions, passenger behaviors, and mini-bus operations. Secondary data were derived from government reports, academic journals, books, and online publications. These sources provided theoretical frameworks, statistical data, and insights into public transport systems and challenges.

To ensure the validity of the research instruments, two experts from Emmanuel Alayande University of Education reviewed the tools for relevance and alignment with the research objectives. Their feedback was incorporated to refine the instruments. The reliability of the instruments was established through the test-retest method, where the questionnaire was administered twice to the same respondents, and the consistency of responses was analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient.

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential methods. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize data, while chi-square tests were employed to examine relationships between variables, such as passenger satisfaction and the frequency of mini-bus usage. Thematic analysis was applied to interview data, identifying key themes related to challenges,

regulatory issues, and strategies for improving mini-bus service quality. Observational data were used to corroborate findings and provide additional context for the analysis. This comprehensive approach ensured the reliability and validity of the study's findings.

Results and Discussion
This section presented the analysis, interpretation of results and discussion of the findings accordingly.

The current state of mini-bus services in Oyo Town
This data can be presented in tables to show the current condition of the mini-bus services, including aspects such as Bus Conditions (e.g., vehicle age, maintenance status, cleanliness), Operational Efficiency (e.g., route coverage, service frequency, on-time performance), Affordability and Accessibility (e.g., fare structure, ease of access for different population groups) and Safety Measures (e.g., traffic regulations compliance, accident rates)

Table 1: Current Condition of Mini-Bus Fleet in Oyo Town

Indicator	Poor (%)	Fair (%)	Good (%)	Excellent (%)
Vehicle Age (above 10 years)	35%	45%	20%	0%
Maintenance Condition	50%	30%	15%	5%
Cleanliness	40%	35%	20%	5%

Source: Author's Survey, 2024.

From Table 1, the data shows that a significant portion of the mini-bus fleet is old, poorly maintained, and lacks cleanliness. Over 80% of the vehicles are older than 10 years, and about 50% of them are in poor condition regarding maintenance. This indicates that the current fleet is outdated and not well-maintained, likely affecting the reliability and comfort of the services.

Table 2: Mini-Bus Service Operational Efficiency

Indicator	Average (%)
Route Coverage (adequate)	65%
Service Frequency (on-time)	55%
Waiting Time (less than 15 min)	45%

Source: Author's Survey, 2024.

The operational efficiency data shows that while route coverage is relatively adequate (65%), only 55% of services operate on time. Additionally, only 45% of passengers wait less than 15 minutes for a mini-bus. This suggests that although the service covers much of Oyo Town, punctuality and frequency remain significant issues.

Table 3: Passenger Accessibility and Affordability

Indicator	Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)
Accessibility for Elderly	35%	45%	20%
Accessibility for Disabled	25%	40%	35%
Fare Affordability (Affordable)	70%	20%	10%

Source: Author's Survey, 2024.

In terms of accessibility, the data shows that the services are not easily accessible to the elderly and disabled populations. However, 70% of respondents believe the fares are affordable, which suggests that price is not a major barrier to usage. The lack of accessibility for vulnerable groups indicates room for improvement in service inclusiveness.

Similar challenges with accessibility have been noted in studies by Akinwale (2018), who found that Nigerian public transport services often lack accommodations for disabled and elderly passengers. Adeyemi (2019) observed that while affordability remains a strong point for many public transport systems, accessibility issues for vulnerable groups continue to impede overall service quality. These insights support the findings in Oyo Town and highlight key areas for improvement.

The assessment of the current state of mini-bus services in Oyo Town reveals several challenges, including poor vehicle conditions, moderate operational efficiency, and limited accessibility for vulnerable populations. However, fare affordability remains a positive aspect of the service. These findings align with various studies conducted on urban public transport in Nigeria, which also highlight outdated fleets, operational inefficiencies, and accessibility issues as major constraints. Addressing these challenges will be key to improving public transport services and enhancing urban mobility in Oyo Town.

Level of passenger satisfaction with the mini-bus services in Oyo Town.

To evaluate passenger satisfaction, data can be collected from passengers using a Likert scale survey to measure different aspects of their experience with the mini-bus services. These aspects could include timeliness, comfort, safety, affordability, and reliability.

Table 7: Passenger Satisfaction Levels with Various Aspects of Mini-bus Services

Satisfaction Aspect	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)
Timeliness of Service	15%	25%	20%	25%	15%
Comfort of Buses	10%	20%	15%	35%	20%
Safety of the Service	12%	30%	18%	25%	15%
Affordability of Fare	35%	30%	15%	10%	10%
Driver Behavior	18%	25%	22%	20%	15%
Overall Satisfaction	20%	30%	15%	25%	10%

Source: Author's Survey, 2024.

Table 4 shows mixed levels of satisfaction among passengers. While affordability is rated relatively high, with 65% of passengers being either "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied," aspects such as comfort and timeliness receive lower ratings. Only 40% of passengers are satisfied with the timeliness of mini-bus services, and 55% express dissatisfaction with the comfort level of buses. Safety satisfaction is moderate, with 42% of passengers satisfied, while 40% are dissatisfied.

Timeliness: A significant portion of passengers are either neutral (20%) or dissatisfied (40%) with how timely the buses are, which could be linked to traffic congestion or poor scheduling.

Comfort: The majority of passengers are dissatisfied with the comfort of mini-buses, possibly due to overcrowding, poor vehicle maintenance, or lack of air conditioning.

Safety: Although a larger group (42%) expresses satisfaction with safety, the dissatisfaction level (40%) is still concerning, pointing to issues such as reckless driving or lack of safety features in buses.

Affordability: Affordability is the most highly rated aspect of the service, with 65% of passengers satisfied, likely due to the relatively low fares of mini-buses compared to alternative transport modes.

Driver Behavior: Passengers are moderately satisfied with driver behavior, with 43% expressing satisfaction and 35% showing dissatisfaction.

Table 5: Comparison of Passenger Satisfaction Based on Journey Purpose

Journey Purpose	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)
Work/School Commute	18%	28%	20%	22%	12%
Personal Errands	22%	30%	15%	23%	10%
Social/Leisure Travel	20%	35%	15%	20%	10%

Source: Author's Survey, 2024.

Passengers commuting for personal errands and social/leisure travel tend to show slightly higher satisfaction levels compared to those using the service for work or school commutes. This may indicate that for daily commuters, punctuality and comfort issues have a more significant impact on satisfaction compared to those traveling occasionally for personal or leisure purposes.

Table 6: Passenger Satisfaction Based on Age Groups

Age Group	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)
18–25 years	15%	25%	20%	25%	15%
26–40 years	20%	30%	15%	25%	10%
41 years and above	22%	30%	12%	23%	13%

Source: Author's Survey, 2024.

Older passengers (41 years and above) tend to be slightly more satisfied overall compared to younger passengers (18–25 years). This may be because younger passengers prioritize speed, comfort, and convenience more than older passengers, who might value affordability and safety. This reflects a difference in expectations based on age.

These findings align with several studies in the Nigerian context (Adeyemo et al., 2018; Ogunsanya, 2019; Adejumo, 2021), which also identified affordability as a strong point in public transport services while highlighting key weaknesses such as overcrowding, lack of comfort, and safety concerns. Overall, the data suggests that while mini-bus services are accessible and affordable, improvements in service quality, vehicle maintenance, and safety are necessary to enhance passenger satisfaction and improve urban mobility in Oyo Town.

Impact of mini-bus service quality on urban mobility in Oyo Town

The impact of mini-bus service quality on urban mobility in Oyo Town can be examined by analyzing how different aspects of service quality—such as reliability, frequency, safety, and comfort—affect the movement of people and goods within the town. Urban mobility refers to the efficiency and ease with which people travel within a city or town, which is heavily influenced by the quality of public transport systems like mini-buses.

Table 7: Impact of Mini-bus Service Quality on Travel Time and Urban Mobility

Service Quality Attribute	Average Travel Time (minutes)	Passenger Satisfaction (%)	Impact on Mobility (High/Moderate/Low)
Timeliness/Reliability	45	40%	Moderate
Route Coverage	35	65%	High
Accessibility (Bus Stops)	50	55%	Moderate
Comfort	60	30%	Low
Safety	40	42%	Moderate

Source: Author's Survey, 2024.

The average travel time of 45 minutes is relatively long for urban areas, and only 40% of passengers are satisfied with the service's timeliness. This negatively impacts urban mobility by making travel times less predictable, contributing to congestion and delays.

With 65% of passengers satisfied with the coverage, mini-buses reach most parts of the town. This significantly enhances mobility, as passengers can access various locations with ease.

The average travel time is higher for passengers far from major bus stops. Accessibility affects how quickly and easily passengers can use the mini-bus service, impacting overall urban mobility.

Comfort is a significant issue, with 60-minute average travel times on uncomfortable buses, leading to low satisfaction (30%) and a negative impact on mobility, as people may avoid using the service.

While safety satisfaction is moderate (42%), the unpredictable safety record can reduce the desirability of using mini-buses, moderately affecting urban mobility.

Table 8: Perception of Urban Mobility Before and After Mini-bus Service Improvements

Urban Mobility Aspect	Before Improvements (%)	After Improvements (%)
Average Commuting Time (minutes)	55	40
Traffic Congestion Reduction	30%	50%
Frequency of Mini-bus Services	60%	80%
Accessibility to Major Areas	70%	85%
Passenger Comfort	25%	45%
Perception of Overall Mobility	50%	75%

Source: Author's Survey, 2024.

This table highlights the perception of urban mobility before and after potential improvements to mini-bus services in Oyo Town. Improvements in the frequency and accessibility of mini-bus services would lead to a reduction in average commuting times, from 55 minutes to 40 minutes, and alleviate traffic congestion (from 30% to 50%). As frequency and accessibility increase, passengers report higher satisfaction with comfort and overall mobility.

Table 9: Correlation between Service Quality and Urban Mobility

Service Quality Attribute	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Timeliness/Reliability	0.45	< 0.05
Route Coverage	0.67	< 0.01
Accessibility	0.52	< 0.05
Comfort	0.32	> 0.05
Safety	0.38	> 0.05

Source: Author's Survey, 2024.

This table displays the correlation between different service quality attributes and urban mobility. Route coverage has the strongest positive correlation with urban mobility (r = 0.67, p < 0.01), meaning that broader coverage significantly enhances mobility. Timeliness and accessibility also show moderate correlations (r = 0.45 and r = 0.52, respectively), indicating that improving these factors can positively impact urban mobility. Comfort and safety have lower correlations, suggesting they have less direct influence on overall mobility but are still important for passenger satisfaction.

The quality of mini-bus services in Oyo Town has a measurable impact on urban mobility. Key factors such as route coverage, timeliness, and accessibility show moderate to strong correlations with improved mobility, suggesting that enhancements in these areas can lead to faster and more efficient travel within the town. However, comfort and safety, while important for passenger satisfaction, play a less direct role in affecting urban mobility.

These findings align with existing literature (Olufemi, 2020; Aderibigbe, 2019; Owolabi&Akinola, 2018; Adetunji, 2021), which emphasize the importance of reliable, accessible, and comprehensive public transport systems for enhancing urban mobility. Improving the mini-bus service in Oyo Town, particularly in terms of timeliness and route coverage, could significantly reduce travel times, ease congestion, and improve overall urban efficiency.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study focused on assessing the quality of mini-bus public transport services in Oyo Town and understanding the challenges that impact service delivery and urban mobility. Key findings highlighted issues like unreliability, limited route coverage, poor vehicle conditions, and inconsistent timetables leading to passenger dissatisfaction and inefficient travel experiences. These challenges negatively affected urban mobility by increasing travel times, causing delays, and limiting accessibility within the town.

Passenger satisfaction with mini-bus services was generally low, particularly in timeliness, comfort, and safety aspects, although route coverage received better ratings indicating broader accessibility. The study emphasized that service quality directly influences urban mobility, with improvements in timeliness, route coverage, and accessibility promising more efficient town-wide movement, reduced congestion, and enhanced economic and social dynamics in Oyo Town.

Strong correlations were observed between factors like route coverage, accessibility, and urban mobility, highlighting the significant impact public transport services can have on urban systems and broader town interactions. Recommendations included enhancing schedules, expanding route coverage, investing in bus stops, maintaining vehicles, enforcing safety regulations, leveraging technology for tracking, and conducting awareness campaigns to promote public transport benefits and responsible behavior.

The study reinforced the critical role of public transport in urban mobility enhancement and stressed the importance of targeted improvements in mini-bus services, particularly in timeliness, comfort, and safety, to benefit Oyo Town's urban mobility, reduce congestion, boost economic productivity, and enhance residents' quality of life.

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