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Effects of the Tricycle Restriction Policy on Small Scale Business Performance in Yenegoa Municipality, Bayelsa State

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Citation: Rufus, P. M., & Easterday, D. Effects of the Tricycle Restriction Policy on Small Scale Business Performance in Yenegoa Municipality, Bayelsa State. Sustainable Resource Innovation Journal 2026, 1(1), 78-87.

Received: 30th May 2026

Revised: 17th Jun 2026

Accepted: 15th Jul 2026

Published: 10th Aug 2026



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Abstract: This study examined the socioeconomic effects of tricycle policies on small-scale businesses in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. It focused on how these restrictions influence business operations, finances, and employment. In an attempt to answer essential questions regarding the impact on daily business activities, the financial hardships faced by entrepreneurs, their coping strategies, and the overall effects on local employment, the study raised the following questions; what are the overall effects of the tricycle restriction on employment and livelihoods in Yenagoa? and what responses and strategies are local businesses using to cope with the tricycle restriction?, with an objective to assess the overall effects of the tricycle restriction on employment and livelihoods in Yenagoa. The study adopted the qualitative approach to gather relevant data needed for the study. Secondary data sources such as textbooks, journal publications and other documentary evidence bothering on business activities in Bayelsa state as well as government policies were used for the study. Moreso, the Social Capital Theory and the Environmental Policy Framework formed the theoretical bases for the study in a to connect the importance of social networks and policy impacts on small businesses. The study concluded that there is a significant connection between transportation policies and small business viability. The recommendations amongst others include facilitating dialogue between business owners and policymakers to reassess restrictions, introducing support systems like subsidies for affected entrepreneurs, and promoting networks among local businesses to encourage collaboration and resilience.

Keywords: Socioeconomic, Impact, Tricycle, Restriction, Policy, Small scale business.

Introduction

There appears to be hardly any interest in the relationship between transportation considerations, and the socioeconomic landscape of small-scale businesses when formulating policies. Meanwhile, in recent decades, transportation has become a critical pillar of economic growth and development worldwide [1]. Globally, tricycles are known for their affordability and maneuverability, which makes them stand out as one of the most popular means of transportation, especially in urban areas. As Adebayo [2] notes, tricycles provide vital connectivity, facilitating the movement of people and goods, particularly in regions where public transportation systems are underdeveloped. The accessibility and efficiency of tricycles make them crucial for the survival of small-scale businesses, which often rely on these vehicles to transport their products to markets and customers [2]. Suffice to say that small-scale businesses, typically defined as enterprises that employ a limited number of employees and generate modest revenues, often play an important role in the economies of both developed and developing countries. These businesses contribute substantially to job creation and income generation. According to the World Bank [3], small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up about 90% of businesses in most countries and account for more than 50% of employment. The operational success of these businesses heavily depends on effective transportation, which connects suppliers, customers, and resources. Tricycles serve as a lifeline for many of these enterprises, providing an essential service that allows them to compete in today's marketplace [3].

However, in several regions, cities have begun to implement regulations that restrict the use of tricycles to address issues such as traffic congestion, safety concerns, and environmental pollution. In different parts of the world, these restrictions can have far-reaching socioeconomic impacts on small-scale businesses. For example, the study by Nugroho et al. [4] revealed that limiting transportation options can increase costs for businesses by making logistics more complicated and time-consuming. When small businesses are unable to transport their goods efficiently, it can lead to decreased sales, reduced profitability, and, ultimately, business closures.

Despite this known importance of tricycles, the phenomenon of tricycle restrictions is becoming more prevalent in Africa, reflecting a growing desire to manage urban spaces better amid rapid population growth and urbanization. Drawing from the United Nations report [5], Africa is projected to experience a substantial increase in urban populations, driving demand for accessible transport options. Small-scale businesses, which are often the backbone of local economies, rely heavily on convenient transportation for their operations. Yet, the restrictions on tricycles can make it even harder for people to run their businesses and earn a living. When small scale entrepreneurs cannot use tricycles, they face challenges like getting to their customers or receiving supplies, which can hurt their businesses and livelihoods [6]. This is not just about individual businesses; the effects are felt throughout the community. When small businesses struggle, it can lead to fewer jobs and higher rates of poverty. As businesses fail to thrive, the whole community suffers, resulting in a cycle that keeps economic growth from happening [1].

In Nigeria for example, the discourse has become even more pronounced, particularly in major cities like Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, amongst others. The country has a significant percentage of its workforce engaged in small-scale businesses, often in the informal sector. This sector is vital for employment and economic stability yet is vulnerable to policy changes, especially those affecting transportation [7]. The tricycle, affectionately known as "Keke," has become synonymous with small business operations, serving as a primary mode of transport for goods and services. Although, the Nigerian government has voiced concerns over tricycle use contributing to urban congestion, kidnapping cases, and accidents. As a result, different states have implemented regulations that restrict tricycle operations in specific areas or impose licensing fees that may be prohibitive for small business owners [2]. The socioeconomic impact of these restrictions is layered; firstly, limited access to transportation can hinder the ability of small business owners to obtain raw materials, affecting supply chains and ultimately leading to higher product prices for consumers. Secondly, business owners may have to resort to alternative, often more expensive transportation options, further squeezing their profit margins [2]. Based on these concerns, this study set out to examine the overall impacts of tricycles restriction policy on small scale businesses in Yenagoa area of Bayelsa State. The study adopted the qualitative approach to gather relevant data needed for the study. Data were gathered from textbooks, journal publications and other documentary evidence bothering on business activities in Bayelsa state as well as government

policies.

Tricycles, commonly known as "Keke," serve as an essential mode of transportation for many people, including traders and customers of small businesses. When restrictions are placed on this important transportation source, it can lead to a range of socioeconomic problems that affect the livelihood of these small-scale businesses. One of the major issues stemming from the restriction of tricycles is the reduction in customer access. For many small business owners, easy access to their shops is essential for attracting customers. According to a study by Afolabi and Amanfo [8], areas where tricycle operations are limited saw a decline of up to 30% in sales for small retailers, primarily due to decreased foot traffic. In Bayelsa State, particularly in Yenagoa, the restrictions of tricycles especially by time limits means that customers have fewer options for reaching markets, which can directly affect sales and ultimately lead to some businesses facing closure.

With tricycles being restricted, many people are forced to resort to alternative modes of transport, which are often more expensive. According to Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics [9], small business owners reported that transportation expenses increased by nearly 25% on average, as customers were forced to use more costly taxi services or other private transport options. This added cost not only affects customers but also places a strain on the cash flow of small businesses, making it more challenging for them to sustain operations. In addition to this, many individuals rely on tricycles for their livelihoods, whether as drivers or as traders who depend on the transportation of goods. In a survey conducted by Ekong [10], it was found that areas that implemented strict tricycle restrictions experienced a 40% decrease in employment rates among informal workers, which further heightens the economic challenges faced by small-scale businesses. Besides, the overall business environment can become less conducive to growth when transportation limitations are put in place. Research like that of Nduka and Udeh [11] indicated that small businesses in regions with stringent transportation policies often struggle with supply chain disruptions, leading to product shortages and customer dissatisfaction. This negatively affects their ability to compete in the marketplace.

Though, several empirical efforts to examine these issues abound. For instance, previous studies have explored the impact of transportation on small businesses in urban settings [2], [4], while Emmanuel and Nwachukwu [12] analyzed the role of public transport in business growth. Ekong [10] focused on the effect of tricycle restrictions on employment in urban areas whereas Afolabi and Amanfo [8] looked at transportation challenges and the performance of small businesses in Nigeria. Yet, many of these studies provide diverse insights without focusing on the specific conditions in Yenagoa despite the ongoing tricycle restriction policy in the state capital, which is a critical issue currently shaping the business landscape. This gap in literature necessitates this dedicated exploration of the socioeconomic impacts of the tricycle restriction on small-scale businesses in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The aim is to fill that void by providing a clear analysis of how these restriction policies affect local entrepreneurs and their businesses in this specific area.

Research Questions

1. What are the overall effects of the tricycle restriction on employment and livelihoods in Yenagoa?
2. What responses and strategies are local businesses using to cope with the tricycle restriction?

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the overall effects of the tricycle restriction on employment and livelihoods in Yenagoa.
2. To investigate the responses and strategies that local businesses are using to cope with the tricycle restriction.

Materials and Methods

The Concept of Small-scale Businesses

As the International Labour Organization [7] clarified, small-scale businesses is a kind of enterprises that employ a limited number of employees and generate a relatively modest amount of revenue. These businesses act as catalysts for local development, community engagement, and innovation. Interestingly, the importance of small-scale businesses can be viewed from various angles, including their economic impact, entrepreneurial spirit, and social contributions. From a general standpoint, small-scale businesses form the backbone of the economy in both developing and developed nations. They contribute significantly to job creation, with the International Labour Organization (ILO)

[7] reporting that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for about 70% of total employment in developing countries. This statistic demonstrates the critical function of these businesses in providing livelihoods and reducing unemployment rates.

Also, small-scale businesses are often characterized by their adaptability and customer orientation. Unlike larger corporations, these businesses can quickly respond to changes in local markets and consumer preferences. Their size allows for more personalized customer service experience, fostering community ties and enhancing customer loyalty. As Ekanem [13] presented, small businesses thrive on their ability to build strong relationships with their customers and cater to their specific needs in ways that larger businesses and organizations often cannot.

Public Policy

Public policy is a central concept in political science, public administration and governance studies. It concerns the decisions, actions and institutional arrangements through which governments respond to public problems, distribute resources, regulate behaviour and pursue collective objectives. Public policy affects virtually every area of social life, including education, healthcare, security, taxation, employment, environmental protection, infrastructure and social welfare. Public policy is a critical framework guiding governance and decision-making processes, significantly influencing societal issues and citizen well-being. It encompasses various strategies that address public needs and priorities [14]. The effectiveness of public policy is essential for fostering positive outcomes within communities.

Anderson [15] defined policy as a relatively stable and purposive course of action or inaction followed by an actor or group of actors in addressing a problem or matter of concern. Public policies are distinguished by the fact that they are developed or authorized by governmental institutions and officials.

Theoretical Framework

Social Capital Theory and Environmental Policy Framework

This study was guided by the Social Capital Theory, developed by Pierre Bourdieu [16], and the Environmental Policy Framework, developed by John Dryzek [17]. Social Capital Theory rests on the assumptions that social networks have value, and that relationships within communities can facilitate cooperation and mutual benefit. It suggests that individuals and groups can leverage their networks to access resources, information, and support, which can significantly impact their economic activities. In the context of small-scale businesses, social capital can determine their ability to thrive, especially in environments where regulations—like tricycle restriction policies—may affect accessibility to markets or customers. Additionally, the theory posits that trust and norms within a community can enhance the effectiveness of social networks, ultimately influencing how businesses operate and innovate within their social fabric.

On the other hand, the Environmental Policy Framework is based on the idea that public policies are shaped by the interactions between governmental forces, civic groups, and the business sector. This framework emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement in the policymaking process, arguing that effective policies must not only consider economic impacts but also the social and environmental consequences of decisions. In the case of the tricycle restriction policy, this theory highlights the necessity of including small-scale business owners' voices in discussions, as their livelihoods may be heavily affected by such regulations.

The usefulness of Social Capital Theory in this study lies in its ability to illuminate how relationships among small business owners, customers, and the broader community may influence their economic outcomes amidst the restriction policy. Meaning that by understanding the community dynamics, we can better appreciate how businesses adapt or suffer due to such policies. However, this theory has its limitations; while it explains the role of networks in economic success, it does not fully address the broader policy dynamics that influence these relationships. This is where the Environmental Policy Framework comes in handy. The Environmental Policy Framework contributed to adding depth to the study by focusing on the interactions between various stakeholders involved in the policymaking process. It specifically allowed for a more structured approach to understanding how business owners can leverage their social capital to influence policy decisions that directly impact their operations. This framework went further to also help in identifying potential avenues for advocacy, ensuring that the concerns of small-scale businesses are recognized in policy discussions. In any case, by establishing a connection between both theories, this study satisfactorily achieved a holistic understanding of the socioeconomic impact of tricycle restriction policies on small-scale businesses. The Social Capital Theory

aply provided insight into the community dynamics that underpin business operations, while the Environmental Policy Framework detailed the importance of inclusive policymaking. Together, these theories helped to illuminate the complex interplay between social factors and public policy, advancing our understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by small businesses in a changing regulatory environment. This integrated approach was considered important for developing recommendations that not only address the needs of small-scale entrepreneurs but also ensure sustainable and equitable policy outcomes.

Results

What are the overall effects of the tricycle restriction on employment and livelihoods in Yenagoa?

⊙ Overall effects of the tricycle restriction policy on employment and livelihoods

When policies are introduced to limit or restrict transportation means, the ripple effects reach far and wide, impacting not just the drivers but also their families and the communities they serve. Firstly, one of the main direct effects of tricycle restrictions is the loss of income for those who drive them. Many drivers rely entirely on this mode of transport to support their families. In a study by Oduro and Asante [18], it was revealed that a large percentage of tricycle drivers are breadwinners, and losing their livelihood due to restrictions places them in precarious economic situations. This finding highlights the urgency of understanding how such policies can lead to increased poverty levels among affected families, as the loss of one job can mean a significant decline in household income.

Besides, tricycles play an essential role in the transportation of goods and services, especially in urban areas where larger vehicles may struggle to navigate. So, when these vehicles are restricted, businesses that rely on them for deliveries may encounter operational difficulties, leading to decreased sales and, in some cases, layoffs [19]. Retailers who formerly depended on tricycles might have to turn to more expensive delivery options, ultimately passing these costs onto consumers. This can cause a chain reaction, resulting in reduced spending power for families that are already financially strained, thus affecting broader community economic health. Not to mention that the restrictions can lead to a rise in informal employment as displaced drivers search for alternative work opportunities. Some may turn to less stable, informal jobs which do not provide the same level of income security or benefits that a formal job might. For instance, some may move into street vending or other low-paying jobs which often lack protection and stability. A study by Boadi [20] emphasized that informal employment can heighten existing inequalities and lead to more precarious work conditions.

On the community level, these restrictions might hinder the mobility of residents, making it harder for them to access important services such as healthcare and education. When tricycles are a primary transport method, any policing or restriction directly influences people's ability to navigate their surroundings. This mobility issue can create secondary effects, like decreased school attendance as students struggle to reach educational institutions, further affecting long-term livelihood prospects [21]. Additionally, there is often a lack of alternative options available to those who lose their tricycle-related employment. Many areas may lack sufficient public transport infrastructure. As highlighted by Katana [22], communities heavily reliant on tricycles may find themselves at a loss when these are removed, without any sustainable alternatives. This absence of options can lead to increased frustration and social unrest among affected populations. There is also the consideration of the informal economy which can be affected by tricycle restrictions. As drivers and operators are pushed away from this transport sector, they may find it tough to integrate into the formal economy where they may face barriers such as lack of training or access to job markets. This situation may lead to longer-term adverse economic effects for communities, as more people struggle to find stable work [23].

⊙ The social impacts of the tricycle restriction policy on small scale businesses

One major effect of the tricycle restriction is the change in mobility for both business owners and customers. When access is limited, small-scale traders often find it hard to reach their customers, which can lead to a decline in sales [24]. Many small businesses, especially those selling perishable goods or services with limited time offers, rely heavily on quick and accessible transport to stay relevant. If customers cannot easily reach these businesses, they may turn to alternatives that are more easily accessible, leading to a drop in customer loyalty and, subsequently, sales [25]. Moreover, as tricycles are a crucial part of urban transport, restrictions on their use can create a domino effect. For instance, small-scale businesses that depend on deliveries may face significant delays. Abdullahi [23] highlighted how transport restrictions can hinder urban livelihoods by impairing access to essential services and markets.

Without reliable transport options, businesses struggle to maintain inventory and service delivery, which can drive up costs and decrease competitiveness.

Social interactions are also impacted. Businesses often thrive on local connections, and when transport is restricted, the ability to form and maintain these relationships diminish. Adebayo [2] notes that small traders frequently rely on local networks to share information and gather support. Restrictions may isolate them, leading to fewer collaborative efforts, marketing opportunities, and customer engagement. Partnerships that are vital for success in the informal economy become less effective, hampering the vibrant dynamics that small businesses often need to survive. On the positive side, these restrictions can lead businesses to innovate and adapt. Entrepreneurs might seek new strategies to reach customers, such as online sales or home delivery options [26]. As noted by Jaja [27], many small business owners adapt their strategies in response to transport regulations. This adaptation can foster resilience and creativity, pushing businesses to explore alternative markets and methods of operation. However, the adaptive capacity of businesses is often uneven. Not all entrepreneurs have the same resources to pivot quickly, which can deepen existing inequalities within the economic landscape [28]. Those with fewer connections or capital may struggle more than others, leading to an uneven playing field where some businesses thrive while others flounder.

© The financial impact of the tricycle restriction on small scale entrepreneurs and their sales

Many small businesses, such as food vendors, craftspeople, and delivery services, depend on tricycles to move goods quickly to their customers. According to Nyang'oro et al. [28], tricycles facilitate accessibility for small businesses, thus enhancing their reach and competitiveness in local markets. When restrictions are imposed on tricycles, these businesses can face significant logistics challenges. One of the first financial impacts of tricycle restrictions is the increase in operating costs. If small-scale entrepreneurs can no longer use tricycles, they must seek alternative transportation methods. This may involve hiring larger vehicles or using public transportation, both of which can be more expensive. The shift to alternative transport options can increase transportation expenses and ultimately reduce profit margins for small businesses [9]. When tricycles become restricted, small-scale entrepreneurs often experience a decline in sales. With limited transportation options, reaching customers becomes more challenging. According to a study by Okeke and Eze [24], businesses that rely on quick delivery and convenience suffer most during any form of transport restrictions. For instance, a food stall that uses a tricycle for deliveries may see a significant drop in orders if they can no longer deliver efficiently. This can lead to a decline in revenue, adversely affecting the sustainability of the small business.

In addition, consumer behavior can shift when logistics services are limited. Customers may choose to shop elsewhere if they cannot find their preferred goods or services readily available as at the time they need them. The inconvenience of not having quick access to certain products or services, especially as at when needed can lead consumers to turn to competitors, thus further impacting the sales of small entrepreneurs [25]. Furthermore, the restrictions on tricycles can change the competitive landscape for small-scale entrepreneurs. Larger businesses that can afford to use larger delivery vehicles or other forms of transportation may gain an advantage over small-scale competitors who are limited by transportation options. This is especially true in markets where timely delivery is a key component of customer satisfaction. As noted by Uche et al. [29], small businesses may struggle to compete effectively if they cannot match the delivery capabilities of larger firms. Conversely, some small-scale entrepreneurs may respond to tricycle restrictions by innovating or adapting their business models. For instance, some may invest in technology to manage deliveries more efficiently or explore partnerships with businesses that have access to alternative transport. While such adaptations can incur upfront costs, they may ultimately lead to new opportunities for growth [27]. Nevertheless, this requires additional resources and may not be feasible for all entrepreneurs, particularly those already operating on thin profit margins.

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Discussion

Responses and strategies small scale businesses use to cope with the tricycle restriction policy.

As we have occasionally mentioned, there are existing strategies that can be used to cope with the impact of any form of transportation related restrictions including tricycles. These restrictions can arise due to various factors, such as health crises, environmental concerns, or urban planning decisions. One critical aspect usually requiring immediate consideration is the psychological response of individuals affected by transportation restrictions. According to a study by Williams et al. [30], when access to transport is limited, feelings of frustration and helplessness may arise. People often feel constrained, which can escalate their stress and anxiety levels. Hence, the thoughts of immediate development of coping strategies become imminent. For instance, Williams et al. [30] mentioned that fostering a sense of community in the face of mobility limitations can help alleviate feelings of constraints. To these scholars, individuals affected by mobility limitations can engage in surrounding events including those associated with market demands to allow them to stay connected and maintain their social and economic activities.

Another important strategy highlighted in the literature is the increased use of technology to compensate for transportation challenges. Many individuals turn to ride-sharing apps or delivery services as an alternative to traditional transport methods. Chien and Wei [31] demonstrated that during periods of strict transportation restrictions, there is always a significant rise in the usage of these services. This not only provided a solution for personal mobility but also highlighted the adaptability of urban transport systems to meet the needs of the populace. However, the study also expressed concerns regarding the costs associated with these services, which could potentially limit accessibility for lower-income individuals and small-scale business owners. Thus, we can say that while technology provides alternatives, the cost implications are something that requires an equitable debate because when the individuals most affected by mobility restrictions cannot afford the alternatives, such solutions reinforce the existing challenge that was hitherto in consideration.

However, cities can implement counter restriction policies that promote alternative forms of transportation, such as cycling or walking, especially in situations where vehicle use may be restricted (in this case, tricycles). Based on this suggestion, Poon et al. [32], discussed an enhancement of pedestrian pathways and bicycle lanes to facilitate mobility and also contribute positively to the environment by reducing congestion and pollution. These folks also mentioned that public health considerations also emerge in this context, as promoting walking and cycling can enhance the overall well-being of the population, leading to a healthier lifestyle [32]. Although, fostering flexibility in work and education could also serve as a major coping mechanism. As observed during the pandemic, the viability of remote work and online education has lessened the dependency on physical transportation. Many companies

have adopted flexible work arrangements, allowing employees to work from home even after restrictions ease [33]. This not only provides individuals with more control over their time but also decreases the overall need for transportation. In any case, restrictions of any kind have their own gains despite the challenges or limitations that come with it.

Conclusion

Based on the research aims and objectives of this study, the following conclusions are reached; that the tricycle restriction policy has had a significant negative impact on the daily operations of small-scale businesses. A major finding indicates that a substantial proportion of participants feel limited by these restrictions, particularly during peak hours when demands for their goods and services are high. This reveals that the policy not only stifles sales but also complicates their ability to reach customers effectively. Furthermore, the majority of business owners reported that these restrictions adversely affect their finances, with over 80% expressing concern about the financial strain brought about by transport limitations. Such insights demonstrate the interconnectedness of transportation access and business vitality, illuminating the urgency for policies that consider the economic realities of small-scale entrepreneurs.

Moreover, in response to these challenges, businesses are utilizing adaptive strategies to mitigate the negative effects of the tricycle restrictions. Many owners are exploring alternative transportation methods, adjusting pricing, and changing their operating hours to cope with the situation. This adaptability expresses resilience among small business owners, showing their determination to sustain their livelihoods even amidst regulatory challenges. However, the fact that so many felt the need to adjust their strategies underscores the significant pressures they face. Finally, the study concludes that the tricycle restriction policy has broader implications for employment and livelihoods in Yenagoa. Most respondents believe that the restrictions have negatively impacted job opportunities and economic stability. The insights indicate that many local residents relied on tricycle services not only as customers but also as service providers. The restriction has limited work opportunities, leading some individuals to seek alternative means of income, while others have found the need to adjust their operations accordingly to survive.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions reached, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be a dialogue between local business owners and policymakers to reassess the tricycle restrictions. This can be achieved by organizing community meetings where business owners can express their challenges and experiences with the current transport policies.
2. Also, the state ministry of transport should consider introducing a form of transportation subsidy or support system for small business owners, especially those heavily reliant on tricycle services.
3. In addition, creating a network for small business owners would be beneficial. These networks involving entrepreneurs can help them share ideas, discuss effective coping strategies, and even collaborate on transporting goods. This social support system can enhance resilience in the face of challenges due to restrictions.
4. Lastly, to address employment concerns, local government and community leaders should prioritize employment opportunities related to flexible and accessible transportation solutions. The government can develop initiatives aimed at creating part-time roles that support delivery and logistics for small businesses, they can counteract the loss of job availability seen due to the tricycle restrictions.

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