NON ADHERENCE OF STUDENTS TO THE USE OF PEDESTRIAN BRIDGES IN UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the Reasons why students refuse to adhere to the use of pedestrian bridges. The intents of the study was to establish the rational why students are convinced that traversing the express road, redeem more time than using the bridge; to find out if the lack of awareness relevance, contributes to the reason students refuse to use the bridge, to find remedies for their attitude towards non-utilization of the bridge, to determine whether students' idea of multiple staircases, and poor orientation, been a reason why students refuse using the pedestrian bridge and to determine the effect of relevant authorities ensuring that students utilizes the bridge.

Respondents were selected from among students of the Faculty of Education University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The data were administered through the use of questionnaires to 170 respondents and had valid responses. The investigation also used, mean, frequency distribution standard deviation and tables as "vital statistical implements for data analysis.

The detailed examination revealed the particular rationale why students are convinced that traversing the express road saves more time than using the bridge are: they are of great height to walk on, intimidation and delay caused by impoverished people, phobia of height, most students are too much in a hurry to meet up appointment/classes, that lack of awareness relevance, contributes to the reason students are unwilling to use the bridge: most students unwillingness in using the bridge range from slightly or no interest on how to use it, so many staircases in it, they see it as not essential, seeing it as a wasted project; that students' idea of too much staircases and lack of interest are also instrumental factors why students decline using the pedestrian bridge. More so, the analysis revealed that relevant authorities should ensure that students utilize the bridge as it will bring about positive result such as reduction in accidents, reduction in traffic jams, creating value for money and that it will make students responsible and civil.

Finally, the study recommends that the relevant authorities should sensitize, enlighten and educate students on the need to make use of pedestrian bridge; endeavour to maintain the pedestrian bridge and ensure it is always in a clean state. The authorities in charge of pedestrian bridge should also ensure that beggars are driven from the facility to prevent harassments and delay cause by them.

Introduction

Each year, more than 270 000 pedestrians lose their lives on the world roads (Federal Road Safety Corps Reporting., 2018). Some leave their homes as they would on any given day never to return. Globally, pedestrians constitute 22% of all road traffic fatalities, and in some countries this proportion is as high as two thirds of all road traffic deaths (World Health Organisation, 2017).

Millions of pedestrians are non-fatally injured – some of whom are left with permanent disabilities. These occurrences cause much hardship, sadness and also economic insecurity. Pedestrian bridge is also known as footbridge and in some areas it is called pedestrian overcrossing or overpass solely planned for individuals walking.

The ability to acknowledge pedestrian safety is a crucial part of attempts to mitigate road traffic injuries. Pedestrian collisions, like other road traffic accidents, should not be accepted as inevitable because they are both predictable and preventable (Adekunle, 2012). The main dangers to pedestrians are well documented, and they include issues related to a broad range of factors: driver actions particularly in terms of racing and alcohol consumption and driving; basic structure in terms of absence of devoted equipment for pedestrians such as sidewalks, raised crosswalks and medians; and vehicle engineering in terms of solid vehicle fronts which are not forgiving to pedestrians should they be struck. Lack of injury care services in many countries also hinder attempts to provide the emergency care required to protect pedestrian lives.

Based on this rational, that pedestrian bridges are sometimes built. Pedestrian bridges encourage pedestrians and bicyclists to safely cross a busy road without accidents. But are pedestrian bridges worth building? It is not a cheap investment. Pedestrian bridges are not cost effective as they involve several million dollars, or more. For some situations, such as across a freeway or a river, pedestrians and bicyclists need to cross at a bridge. But at a location where there is a more direct at-grade crossing, a pedestrian bridge may not be as beneficial as it would elsewhere (Effo, 2013).

One important obstacle to the use of a pedestrian bridge is the distance added to the pedestrian/bicyclist's route. Because of the need to get up above cars and trucks (about 20 feet above the road), straight or spiral ramps are typically used that can be several hundred feet long depending upon the surrounding terrain. Therefore, an important question to ask is which is more valuable to the average pedestrian/bicyclist – a safe crossing using the pedestrian bridge or the time-savings of crossing the road at grade?

Despite the punitive measures governments have put in place to deal with people who flout rules about crossing roads, there does not seem to be any considerable increase in the number of people using the bridges. The dangerous part is that pedestrians are daily knocked down by hit and run motorists. There has been complains by students about the dilapidated state of the pedestrian

bridges. Many of the bridges are in a state of disrepair. There have also been fears that one can get mugged at night. Also some students are not fit enough to climb foot bridges (Effo, 2013)

According to Effo (2013) some reasons why some students avoid using the overhead bridges include- Bridges are too high: Many students have complained that the foot bridges are too high. Indeed. It takes some mental determination to climb a foot bridge. But it is still desirable than endangering one's life moving across busy highways. Steps Are Uneven: Many of the bridges have become old and the concrete steps are worn out. Pedestrians have expressed dissatisfaction about missteps as they use the bridge. Begging: Pedestrians avoid students' foot bridges because of harassment by beggars. Overcrowded: Overpopulation in campus means that foot bridges are overcrowded and the fear that they may collapse is real especially for the old bridges. Mugging: students have expressed fear that they can be robbed especially at night by street urchins. .Fear of height: Acrophobia, the fear of height is one reason why some students avoid the pedestrian bridges. Dilapidation: Many of the bridges have become dilapidated. In some cases, there are gaping holes where one can see cars speeding past from the walkway.

Unsanitary overhead bridge: Some of the bridges lack sanitation. People indiscriminately dump refuse on the walkway. Impatient Pedestrians: Some students are too much in a hurry to meet up appointment that they prefer to risk their lives. But it is preferable to be late than be the late. Lack of Fitness: Many students are not fit and thus find climbing the bridge burdensome. Despite of all the difficulties mentioned above, there is protection to use the pedestrian bridges. According to research carried out. Samboki (2007) claimed that most people prefer to make use of the highway because they cannot afford to pay for the toll on some of the bridges. Most students who participated in the structural utilization programme for tertiary institutions, believes dashing across the road usually saves him a few minutes when he is behind schedule. Specialists asserted that there should be regular examination on the bridges to ensure they have no structural defects and are safe, adding that, due to the pressure on the bridges many of them have started shaking, causing serious worries about the safety of pedestrians. This alone is a put-off for the average pedestrian .Other issues which discourage people from using these bridges are beggars, traders displaying all manner of wares and in some cases human fasces littering the bridges.

Even though the new bridges especially in Lagos have concrete culverts and durable aluminum with staircases that are not so steep, many of the old ones which are subjects of complaint should

be taken care of. Unlike the old ones, the modern bridges have sun shields and good lighting systems to illuminate them at night. With the modern bridges, vehicular movement will be reduced and road accidents will also reduce extremely. The Nigerian Society of Engineers and civil society organizations should serve as watch dogs to ensure that safety and quality are not compromised when constructing and maintaining the bridges. But even in the face of these observations and criticisms, there is a general consensus that the bridges are not enough for the growing Nigerian population. For instance, it has been noticed that these footbridges are built very distant from each other, thereby compelling pedestrians to either walk afar to and from their residences or bus terminals in order to cross them; or to quickly cross the road thereby endangering their lives, as drivers are impatient to wait for pedestrians to cross.

In such circumstances, pedestrians are tempted to risk crossing the ever busy highways despite the dangers inherent in this. The general problem of the non-usage of pedestrian bridge by students and non-students statistically contributed to the high rate of accidents on the high way, attributing to the heavy traffic congestion on the high way. Pedestrians are one of the most vehicular accident victims. Several ways are used to reduce the number of accidents, among others by providing road crossing facilities, such as zebra cross and pedestrian bridge crossing. Regrettably, the use of such facilities, especially foot bridge crossing is still very low. This situation increases the need to support efficient use of the pedestrian bridge crossing. The study location is a pedestrian bridge crossing in the road of Ugbowo, Benin City.

Statement of the Problem

The study seek to investigate the reasons why students refuse to adhere to the use of pedestrian bridges, this is because, it has been observed that in spite of government effort to construct these bridges in our tertiary institution, to curb the high rate of accident and reduce traffic congestion on our road, student still ignore the use of the pedestrian bridge.

Both at country and global levels, the safety regarding pedestrians is of immense interest. According to the Nation's federal road safety (orientation conference), almost in 2013 there were 753 people killed and around 600 people were injured due to the collision between the pedestrian and motor vehicles while crossing the roads (FRSC February 2015). Preliminary statistics show that 176 pedestrians were killed on Benin-Lagos roads in 2002 which is the highest number in 10

years while in 2011 only 143 pedestrian were killed and total 1514 pedestrian were killed in all. Moreover, pedestrian fatalities in 2002 are also up a whopping 26 percent over the number of pedestrian killed in traffic crashes last year.

The Federal road safety corps (FRSC) has published a number of documents giving the information from past research about the pedestrians. In those papers, the main focus is on pedestrian safety and to address different issues like characteristics of pedestrian crashes, analysis of conflicts and hazard formulas, programs related to the pedestrian safety and how to mitigate those issues with respect to the engineering and education (Adekunle, 2012). The Federal Road Safety Corp (FRSC) is doing work to form a tool or system that will help the pedestrian and which will cause the reduction in the collision of pedestrian in crashes. They have developed a Pedestrian and Vehicle Crash Analysis Tool (PVCAT) through the Nigeria Highway Safety Research Center (NSRC). In 1998, 220 pedestrians were killed, which is accounting for 14% of all traffic fatalities. An additional 29,000 pedestrians have been reportedly injured because of collisions with motor vehicles. In order to restrain these fatalities, this software is made which aid the community also national pedestrians to settle these issues and guide planners and engineers to solve these difficulties. When accident statistics from various cities are studied, certain patterns consistently emerge (Bassan, March 2000). Three groups of pedestrians, characterized by age, clearly run the highest risks of being injured or killed in traffic accident. These groups are young children, the elderly, and adults who have been taking drugs etc. A report on accident statistics from many countries prepared by the World Health Organization (1958) is in general agreement with the statistics cited (WHO, 2010). The variable is the students refusal in utilizing the pedestrian bridge as it stands out to be, been the essence of the bridge in preventing accidents. The independent variable is the pedestrian bridge and the effect of its construction, consequences of non-usage. Factors contributing to the non-usage of the bridge by students becomes our dependent variables, which has the tendency to change, none which the researcher tends to achieve at the end of this research.

The general problem as obtained through several reports of accidents still occurring on express roads within the campus environment. These footbridges are set up to ensure that the rate of traffic, accidents can be reduce to the minimal, especially areas where campuses are closer to the express. The challenge has been the neglect of the pedestrian bridge by students, and how these problems

can be resolved. This study is therefore born out of the refusal of students to use the pedestrian bridge close to the campus.

Research Questions

The study will proffer answers to the following questions:

1. What are the reasons for non-utilization of the pedestrian bridge?

2. What is the awareness of the importance of pedestrian bridge among students?

METHODOLOGY

The research design that was adopted for the study is the descriptive survey deign. This is chosen because it is suitable in view of the fact that the study has to do with a large population. Bell-Gram and Omiegbe (1998) stated that descriptive survey gather information systematically about the feature and characteristic of an existing population. Population of the study consists of 7369 students obtained from academic planning Unit, University of Benin). The aforementioned figure is the total population of the eight (8) departments of the Faculty of Education, University of Benin, 2019/2020 academic sessions indicated in the table below:

Population of the Study

S/N	Name of Department	Male	Female	Total Number of Students
1	Adult and Non-formal Education	343	583	926
2	Curriculum and Instructional Technology	651	570	1221
3	Education Evaluation and Counseling Psychology	46	110	156
4	Education Management	889	1172	2061
5	Education Foundation	444	869	1313
6	Human Kinetics and Sports Science	112	196	308
7	Health, Safety and Environmental Education	227	461	688
8	Vocational and Technical Education	281	415	696
	TOTAL	**2993**	**4376**	**7369**

Source: Registrar Office, University of Benin (2021)

For the purpose of this study, random sampling technique, a probability sampling method was used. Random sampling is a statistical method of drawing representative data by ensuring that any item of the universe (population of interest) has an equal chance of being selected as part of the sample. It is, so to say, a probability method in which individual units are picked up from the whole group deliberately through some mechanical and systematic processes.

The rationale for the adoption of random sampling is that it helps the researcher to be free from being biased of the selected sample for the study. Hence, three (3) departments were selected from the population; this will represent 37.5% of proportion of total departments selected (i.e. 3/8 x 100). Also the systematic sampling technique of balloting was introduced to select 10% of the students from each of the department selected. Therefore, 170 students (respondents) made up the sample size of the study.

The instrument for this study was a self-structured questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire comprised of two parts (A and B). Section A of the instrument will elicit information about demographic data of the respondents; while section B shall consist of questions drawn from the research questions which specifically illicit information on the reasons why students refuse to adhere to the use of pedestrian bridges. To ascertain validity of the instrument, the copies of the questionnaire were given to the researcher's supervisor and two other experts in the Department of Health, Safety and Environmental Education (HSE), Faculty of Education, University of Benin. Benin City. Their criticism, suggestion, modification will serve as the final draft from which the instrument was constructed from. The split-half reliability method was adopted to establish the reliability of the instrument. This involves administering questionnaire to one group, then divide the test into two halves, or subsets, each persons will subsequently have two score for the odd-number items and a score for the even-numbered item and then correlate the two set of score. The reliability coefficient for this research work is 0.75. The copies of the research instrument (questionnaire) were administered to the targeted sample size (170 full time and part time students) drawn from the population it represents. The instrument will be distributed to the respondents both full time and part time students for data collection and retrieved after completion.

The data collected from respondents was converted into frequency distribution table where simple percentage system was used for the analysis.

RESULTS

Research question one: What are the reasons for non-utilization of the pedestrian bridge?

Table 2: To identify the reasons why students believe that crossing the express road saves more time than using the bridge

Statements	S. D		D		N. S		A		S.A		Mean	Std.
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)		
Most students avoid using the pedestrian bridges because they are too high to walk on	0	0	4	2.4	5	2.9	37	21.8	124	72.9	4.65	0.66
Most students avoid using the pedestrian bridges because of the harassments and delay cause by beggars	16	9.4	8	4.7	22	12.9	92	54.1	32	18.8	3.68	1.12
Fear of height is one reason why some people avoid the pedestrian bridges	2	1.2	1	.6	12	7.1	50	29.4	105	61.8	4.50	0.76
Most students are too much in a hurry to meet up appointment/classes that they prefer to risk their lives to making use of pedestrian bridge	4	2.4	5	2.9	7	4.1	72	42.4	82	48.2	4.31	0.87
Grand Mean											**4.29**	**0.85**

Researcher's Field Work (2021)

This question seeks to identify the reasons why students believe that crossing the express road, saves more time than using the bridge as showed in Table 2.

Table 2 above contains the mean responses of the respondents to the statements that explain the question on "what are the reasons for non-utilization of the pedestrian bridge". To the first statement in the table, the respondents agreed that most students avoid using the pedestrian bridges because they are too high to walk on (mean=4.65), that most students avoid using the pedestrian bridges because of the harassments and delay cause by beggars (mean=3.68). Similarly, the respondents agreed that fear of height is one reason why some people avoid the pedestrian bridges (mean=4.50) and that most students are too much in a hurry to meet up appointment/classes that they prefer to risk their lives to making use of pedestrian bridge (mean=4.31).

Therefore, we conclude that the respondents' the reasons for non-utilization of the pedestrian bridge is diverse among students with the grand mean value of 4.29 which is greater than the cut-off value of 2.50.

Research question 2: Is the awareness of the importance of pedestrian bridge among students reason for refusal to use bridge?

Table 3: To determine if the lack of awareness relevance, contributes to the reason students refuse to use the bridge

Statements	**S. D**		**D**		**N. S**		**A**		**S.A**		**Mean**	**Std.**
	N	**(%)**	**N**	**(%)**	**N**	**(%)**	**N**	**(%)**	**N**	**(%)**		
Most students do not know how to make use of the pedestrian bridge	27	15.9	14	8.2	18	10.6	62	36.5	49	28.8	3.54	1.40
Lack of orientation by relevant authority contribute to student refusal to make use of pedestrian bridge	18	10.6	5	2.9	21	12.4	64	37.6	62	36.5	3.86	1.24
Most students do not understand the importance of using the pedestrian bridge	1	.6	12	7.1	24	14.1	66	38.8	65	38.2	4.04	1.03
Most students refuse using the pedestrian bridge due to little or no orientation on how to use it	23	13.5	21	12.4	26	15.3	59	34.7	41	24.1	3.44	1.34
Grand Mean											**3.72**	**1.25**

Researcher's Field Work (2021)

This question seeks to ascertain if the awareness of relevance, contributes to the reason students refuse to use the bridge as revealed in Table 3.

Table 3 indicated that the respondents agreed to every item explaining the awareness level of the importance of pedestrian bridge among students as the mean scores for each of the question is greater than 2.5. The mean score of the first item (mean=3.54) indicates that most students do not know how to make use of the pedestrian bridge. Also, the respondents agreed that lack of orientation by relevant authority contribute to student refusal to make use of pedestrian bridge

(mean=3.86). Again, the respondents agreed that most students do not understand the importance of using the pedestrian bridge (mean=4.04) and that most students refuse using the pedestrian bridge due to little or no orientation on how to use it (mean=3.44). Therefore, we conclude that the awareness level of the importance of pedestrian bridge among students is high as the grand mean of the construct is 3.72 which is greater than the cut-off value of 2.5.

DISCUSSION

The focus of study is to find out reasons why students refuse to adhere to the use of pedestrian bridges among university of Benin undergraduate students.

In the course of the investigation, the first findings show that specific reasons students believe that crossing the express road saves more time than using the bridge are: they are too high to walk on, harassments and delay cause by beggars, Fear of height, most students are too much in a hurry to meet up appointment/classes. This is backed by the fact that grand mean value of 4.29 out of the 5 of the sample is in agreement with those reasons about students' beliefs that crossing the express road saves more time than using the bridge.

Similarly, the second finding also show that majority of the respondents are in agreement that lack of awareness relevance, contributes to the reason students refuse to use the bridge. This is as a result of the grand mean value of 3.72 as student responded positively that Lack of orientation/ little or no orientation on how to use pedestrian bridge by relevant authority and most students do not understand the importance of using the pedestrian bridge as factors contributing to students' refusal to make use of the pedestrian bridge.

This findings support the assertion by Lu et al (2012) that students' beliefs that crossing the express road saves more time than using the bridge; lack of awareness relevance, contributes to the reason students refuse to use the bridge; students' attitude towards utilization of the bridge, students' conception of multiple staircases and poor orientation are reasons why students refuse using the pedestrian bridge.

However it should be noted that high awareness on the need to use pedestrian bridges, creating positive attitude in the minds of students as well as organizing orientation programme for students on how to use the pedestrian bridge can help solve the problems of traffic jams and road accidents.

CONCLUSION

This study focused on the reasons why students refuse to adhere to the use of pedestrian bridges with particular reference to students of the University of Benin, Benin City; Edo state.

The study has attempted to identify the reasons why students believe that crossing the express road saves more time than using the bridge, to determine if the lack of awareness relevance, contributes to the reason students refuse to use the bridge; to find remedies for their attitude towards utilization of the bridge; to determine whether students' conception of multiple staircases and poor orientation re reasons why students refuse using the pedestrian bridge and to determine the effect of relevant authorities ensuring that students utilize the bridge**.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has look at the reasons why students refuse to adhere to the use of pedestrian bridges with particular reference to students of the University of Benin, Benin City; Edo state. Results from the research have proved that that majority of students hardly make use of the bridge base on the following reasons: pedestrian bridges are too high to walk on, harassments and delay cause by beggars, fear of height and impatience; ignorance of its usage and importance; negative attitude of students towards the utilization of pedestrian bridge and lack of orientation by relevant authority on the use pedestrian bridge.

Based on the aforementioned reasons, the following recommendations are given:

1. The relevant authorities should sensitize, enlighten and educate students on the need to make use of pedestrian bridge.
2. The relevant authorities should endeavour to maintain the pedestrian bridge and ensure it is always in a clean state.
3. The authorities in charge of pedestrian bridge should ensure that beggars are driven from the facility to prevent harassments and delay cause by them.
4. Pedestrian bridges should not be constructed too high to prevent fear of height cause to students.

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