

HELMET USE IN MOTORCYCLE TAXI OPERATORS IN KAMPALA, UGANDA

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Background The use of motorcycles for commercial transport of passengers (motorcycle taxis) is a growing industry in Uganda. Current observations indicate poor compliance with the motorcycle helmet law by riders. To address this concern, a motorcycle helmet campaign was initiated in Kampala, Uganda. The first step of this campaign was to establish the prevalence of helmet use and reasons for non-use among motorcycle taxi operators (ie, boda boda riders) in order to inform campaign activities.

Objectives To determine the prevalence of helmet use and reasons for non-use among boda boda riders in Kampala, Uganda.

Methods Community data collection from boda boda riders involved three processes: observational helmet use surveys, structured interviews, and focus group discussions.

Results Prevalence of observed helmet use was 30.5% (95% CI 29.5% to 31.6%) among boda boda riders in Kampala. The majority of boda boda riders (71.1%) reported they had helmets available for their own use. Reported barriers to helmet use included helmets being uncomfortable, too heavy, and too expensive. In addition, focus group discussions revealed that many boda boda riders did not wear helmets due to helmet quality issues. While 55% of boda boda riders knew there was a motorcycle helmet law in Kampala, more than half (56.2%) reported that they had been stopped by police for not wearing a helmet.

Significance Research on prevalence of helmet use, enforcement, and barriers for non-use can inform interventions related to helmet distribution, public education, and enforcement efforts to increase helmet use among boda boda riders.