

**MOVEMENT CONTROL RESTRICTIONS, STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES AND
BUSINESS UNCERTAINTY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS IN KAMPALA**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between movement control restrictions, standard operating procedures and business uncertainty of public transport operators in Kampala. Specific objectives of the study were; assess the relationship between movement control restrictions and business uncertainty; standard operating procedures and business uncertainty; and examine combined effect of movement control restrictions and standard operating procedures on business uncertainty of public transport operators in Kampala. This was a cross-sectional research design with a quantitative research approach. A sample of 92 public transport operators was used. This involved public transport operators selected from 6 taxi parks in Kampala. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The study used SPSS (v.25) to analyze data and interpreted results using a frequency table and inferential statistics. Findings established positive relationship between movement control restrictions and business uncertainty; positive relationship between standard operating procedures and business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala ($r=.646$, $p<.01$); and found that movement control restrictions and standard operating procedures significantly predict business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala. The main predictor of business uncertainty was movement control restrictions. The study concludes that while interventions undertaken by the government of Uganda to deal with COVID-19 have proved crucial in achieving this objective, they have extremely affected the business environment. Movement control restrictions and standard operation procedures are increasing business uncertainty of public transport operators in Kampala. The study recommends government to relax movement control

restrictions; and encourage public transport operators should consider further increment of transport fares

Key words: movement control restrictions, standard operating procedures and business uncertainty

Background to the study

The escalation of COVID-19 pandemic worldwide has proved a serious threat for many businesses, without the exception of public transport (Tirachini & Cats, 2020). Public transport operators have expressed concern over the uncertainty of their business which has greatly manifested in unprecedented decline in revenue and demand (Dzisi & Dei, 2020). Accordingly, it is important to explore how various government interventions are contributing to the unprecedented uncertainty of this trend. From literature, one of the underlying reasons for the increasing business uncertainty of public transport operators are movement control restrictions imposed (Tirachini & Cats, 2020; Wielechowski, Czech & Grzęda, 2020).

Nevertheless, IATA COVID-19 Passenger Survey (2020) carried out across 11 countries in Europe, USA and Asia revealed that the total number of passengers during the COVID-19 era declined by more than 37.2% while revenue by 46.9%. In another survey by Bird, Kritocos and Tsivanidis (2020) of International Growth Center conducted in African states of South Africa, Ethiopia and Rwanda as well as Brazil in South America, there is a reduction in the normal capacity loading by public transport operators by over 60% while an average revenue decline of US 5.79 daily since the pandemic.

Likewise, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2020) indicates that transport services demand has declined by more than 29.4%. Many commuters have resorted to using privately owned cars or company vehicles to reach to their destinations. Consequently, operators are finding difficulty to maintain automobiles, others have decided to return them to their owners while those who have persevered have consistently demanded owners to reduce on the daily expected revenue. In the same

regard, Mugume, Opolot, Namanya and Kasekende (2020) decline in the average number of trips by passenger operators following the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country. Indeed, Damian Zane of BBC News on 27 April 2020 conducted an interview with one of the boda-boda riders in Kampala who lamented, "We are going to die because there is nothing we can do" in expression of the drastic decline in revenue from boda-boda business.

Notwithstanding, there is absolutely limited empirical evidence which explains how movement control restrictions and standard operating procedures imposed in the COVID-19 pandemic is increasing business uncertainty in Uganda (Brighton et al., 2023). So far, most of the information available has been investigated at the policy level (Bank of Uganda, 2020; Lakuma et al., 2020; UBOS, 2020). Whereas these strongly emphasize that movement control restrictions and standard operating procedures are a threat, the conclusions are based on general perspective than guidance from research findings. Consequently, this study was found crucial in closing this empirical gap by undertaking aimed at examining the relationship between movement control restrictions, standard operating procedures and business uncertainty, zeroing to public transport operators in Kampala.

Statement of the problem

Despite the government's initiative to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 through restrictions on public transport, the uncertainty of public transport has significantly increased. Many transport business operators in Kampala cannot guarantee whether they will remain in operation (Oromo et al., 2023). Unlike before, public transport operators have become more uncertain of the minimum daily revenue while demand for public transport has also significantly declined (Mugume et al., 2020; Lakuma et al., 2020). As Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2020) indicates demand for taxis has decreased by 29.4% in a period of 6 months.

If this is not checked, it is possible that many public transport operators may decide to close business which will complicate the public transport sector in the country

(Bank of Uganda, 2020). It could likely be that the increasing uncertainty is attributed to movement control restrictions (Tirachini & Cats, 2020) and the prevailing standard operation procedures (Wielechowski et al., 2020). However, there is a general scarcity of empirical studies to show the extent to which movement control restrictions and standard operating procedures are contributing to business uncertainty in Uganda's context.

Research objectives

- 1. To assess the relationship between movement control restrictions and business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala*
- 2. To establish the relationship between standard operating procedures and business uncertainty of public transport operators in Kampala*
- 3. To examine the combined effect of movement control restrictions and standard operating procedures on business uncertainty of public transport operators in Kampala*

Research Questions

- 1. What is the relationship between movement control restrictions and business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala?*
- 2. What is the relationship between standard operating procedures and business uncertainty of public transport operators in Kampala?*
- 3. What is the combined effect of movement control restrictions and standard operating procedures on business uncertainty of public transport operators in Kampala?*

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a cross sectional research design with a quantitative research approach. This research design was selected because of its fitness. This research had a short timeframe within which it was executed, which necessitates adopting

a research design which allows data collection in a snapshot. Additionally, cross-sectional research design studies are important because they enable the research being undertaken to come up with fast conclusions and recommendations to the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative research approach was applied because it provides clear results to show how the cause-and-effect relationship between variables.

Study Population

The study population constituted 120 selected public transport operators in Kampala from the 6 designated taxi and bus parks in Kampala. The taxi parks considered were; old taxi park, new taxi park, Usafi taxi park, Kisenyi bus terminal, Bakuli bus terminal and Namayiba bus terminal. The public transport operators also served as the unit of analysis. On the other hand, the unit of inquiry constituted a driver and conductor who are the primary operators of a taxi. Therefore, they were in better position to explain the business dynamics which came along with movement control restrictions and standard operation procedures given that they are involved in the day-to-day operations of the public transport business.

Sample size and Selection technique

A sample of 92 public transport operators was selected, based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. This study applied stratified random sampling technique to obtain the sample. This technique involved categorizing public transport operators based on an identified characteristic and subsequently applying simple random sampling to arrive at the sample. In this study, public transport operators were distinguished based on park of operation to form 6 strata. Simple random sampling involved writing each public transport operator in each stratum on a piece of paper to form the sampling frame.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the field was sorted, cleaned, edited, coded and later on entered SPSS (v. 25) for analysis (Nelson et al., 2022). The study used a frequency

table and inferential statistics to interpret results. Frequency table was used to present results related to demographic characteristics and interpreted using percent values. Inferential statistics on the other hand comprised correlation and regression. The study used Pearson Correlation Analysis to determine the nature of the relationship (positive, negative) between studied variables and the dependent variable. This model addressed objective one and two herein. A multiple regression analysis was applied to determine the predictability of studied variables on the dependent variable. This model facilitated addressing the third objective herein.

RESULTS

Table 7: Pearson correlation Analysis

Variable/ Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Movement Control Restrictions (1)	1							
Total Business Closure (2)	.523**	1						
Curfew (3)	.570**	.472**	1					
Standard Operation Procedure (4)	.703**	.509**	.575**	1				
Half Loading capacity (5)	0.164	0.018	0.067	.371**	1			
Sanitization (6)	.780**	.332**	.436**	.483**	-0.024	1		
Mask wearing (7)	0.086	0.063	0.123	.494**	0.027	0.140	1	
Business Uncertainty (8)	.736**	.526**	.685**	.646**	0.015	.505**	0.051	1

Notes: n=74; **. $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data

Movement Control Restrictions and Business Uncertainty

Correlation results in table 1 indicated significant and positive relationship between movement control restrictions and business uncertainty ($r = .736$, $p < .01$). In this case, the results meant that increasing movement control restrictions would

worsen business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala. The implication of the results is that movement control restrictions must be relaxed in order to minimize the propensity of worsening business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala. The two dimensions which were studied include; curfew and total business closure. As indicated in table 1, there is a significant and positive relationship between curfew and business uncertainty ($r=.685$, $p<.01$). This meant that the more curfews are imposed, the more public transport operators are likely to register worsening indicators of business uncertainty. Additionally, results obtained a significant and positive relationship between total business closure and business uncertainty ($r=.526$, $p<.01$), which meant that the government needs to diminish total business closure restrictions so as to minimize tendencies of business uncertainty among public transport operators.

Standard Operating Procedures and Business Uncertainty

Correlation results in table 1 indicated significant and positive relationship between standard operating procedures and business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala ($r=.646$, $p<.01$). The results meant that strengthening standard operating procedures would intensify business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala. Moreover, the results indicated that there exists a non-significant and positive relationship between half loading and business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala ($r=.015$, $p>.01$) as well as a non-significant and positive relationship between mask wearing and business uncertainty ($r=.051$, $p>.01$). The results imply that half loading capacity and mask wearing do not matter as far as business uncertainty is concerned among public transport operators in Kampala. Moreover, a significant and positive relationship ($r=.505$, $p<.01$) was established between sanitization and business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala as indicated in table 1. From these findings, it is implied that enforcing sanitization is much more likely to worsen business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala as compared to half loading and mask wearing.

Regression Analysis

The study used multiple regression analysis to examine the predictability of the independent variable and the mediating variable towards the dependent variable. These results are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis

<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstandardize</i>		<i>Standardize</i>		
	<i>d Coefficients</i>	<i>Std.</i>	<i>d Coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1 (Constant)	1.08	0.471		2.305	0.02
	5				4
Movement Control	0.40	0.079	0.558	5.123	0.00
Restrictions	5				0
Standard Operation	0.34	0.147	0.254	2.336	0.02
Procedure	3				2
	<i>R</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>Adj. r²</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	.758 ^a	0.575	0.563	48.02	.000 ^b
				7	

Note: n=74; Dep Var: Business Uncertainty; Predictors: Movement Control Restrictions, Standard Operation Procedure

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 obtained Adj. $R^2=.563$ which implied that jointly movement control restrictions and standard operating procedures significantly predict 56.3% of the variations in business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala. Furthermore, the results indicate standardized coefficients ($\beta=.558$, $t=5.123$, $p<.05$) in relation to movement control restrictions and ($\beta=.254$, $t=2.254$, $p<.05$) in relation to standard operating procedures among public transport operators in

Kampala. Based on the p-values, the results signify that both movement control restrictions and standard operating procedures significantly predict business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala. That said, the comparative analysis of the Beta-values ($B=.558$ and $B=.254$) reveal that movement control restrictions are the best predictor of business uncertainty among public transport operators in Kampala

Conclusion

With the invention of COVID-19 pandemic, governments have been forced to undertake drastic interventions aimed at minimizing the spread of the virus. Among these interventions include; movement control restrictions, and standard operation procedures. Although these strategies have had significant contribution from the health perspective, it is proved beyond reasonable doubt that they have resulted in devastating effect from the business perspective. Specifically, the level of business uncertainty of public transport operators has worsened tremendously. Total business closure and curfews instituted to control movement restrictions along with standard operation procedures, specifically sanitization have increased income and demand uncertainty of this sector.

Recommendations

Government should think about relaxing movement control restrictions to minimize business uncertainty. It should avoid a total business closure because this decision brings economic activity to a standstill making public transport operators highly susceptible to uncertainty. Moreover, government should extend curfew hours to enable public transport operators additional time within which they can run business.

Public transport operators should consider further increment of transport fares as a way of coping with the increasing operation expenditures resulting from standard operation procedures. The new fares should be discussed and agreed upon by the

transport operator's association (UTODA) to ensure the half capacity and sanitization requirements does not affect the going concern of their business.

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