

The use of 'Bodaboda' (motorcycle) as a means of transportation by humans have created 'gendered lives' which has resulted in marked difference in how men and women sit on 'bodaboda' in Mbale, Uganda. While men sit on a 'bodaboda' with their legs astride, women side-saddle (sit sideways with their legs together. Side-saddling poses an immense threat to women's safety and well-being, and constitutes a public health issue which calls for urgent attention. For example, records from the Mbale General Hospital suggest a steady increase in the fatalities observed in women involved in 'bodaboda' accidents compared to men. Many of the fatalities observed occurred in women who side-saddle on 'bodaboda' compared with women who sat with their legs astride on 'bodaboda'. Despite the high associated with women side-saddling on 'bodaboda', women continue to sit sideways on bodaboda. This study focuses on both women and men stories on why women side-saddle on 'bodaboda'; and effects on women in Mbale.

The study adopted a qualitative design, which relied on in-depth interviews used to collect data from purposively selected women and men numbered 27 and 15 respectively. The analysis of data collected was done thematically and reported quoting verbatim where necessary.

Women who participated in the study generally submitted that they side-saddle on 'bodaboda' because cultural norms in their community frown at women from sitting with their legs astride for reasons associated with fear of losing their virginity, which will render them 'cold' and not 'warm' during sexual intercourse with their spouses with possible consequence of rejection and shame. Other reasons mentioned by women include religious belief that conceive sitting with legs astride as sinful because it allows for body contact with the opposite sex, fear of stigmatization, fear of being ostracized, type of dress worn and the absence of legislation against side-saddling. Men who told their stories said that women continue to side-saddle because they continue to pressurize women to sit in that manner for possible fear that if allowed to sit with legs astride, women may become 'bodaboda' riders and compete with them in the 'bodaboda' business.

The study concluded that the designers of 'bodaboda' especially those used for commercial purposes seem not to have been gender sensitive in designing 'bodaboda', which have left women trapped in a psychological helpless state of dilemma between culture and modernity. Therefore, the study recommended the need for advocacy programmes to enlighten and demystify cultural norms that are inimical to the well-being of women; enactment of acts that prohibits women from sitting sideways on 'bodaboda'; discourage all forms of stigmatization about women who sit with their legs astride and design be gender sensitive in designing 'bodaboda'.

