

Factors Responsible for Road Traffic Accidents in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Despite tremendous efforts been made by Federal Road Safety Commission to minimize the road traffic accident through enforcement of safety measures to road users in Nigeria, Road Traffic Accidents are third-leading cause of overall deaths, the leading cause of trauma-related deaths and the most common cause of disability in the country. In Nigeria, injuries and deaths resulting from Road Traffic Accidents are on the rise, and account for the highest proportion of deaths on the Africa continent. According to the WHO, the country has 1042 deaths a year for every 100,000 vehicles, one of the highest rates of road fatalities in the world. In fact, hardly a day goes by without the news of a road traffic crash resulting in loss of lives and/or permanent disability. However, it is against this problem that this study investigates the factors responsible for road traffic accidents in Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that reckless driving, lack of driving skills, overloading, over speed, fatigue, poor maintenance of vehicles, unsafe overtaking, influences of substances, bad road and whether condition are the significant factors to Road Traffic Accident in Nigeria. Based on this findings, it was concluded that majority of accidents in Nigeria occur due to carelessness of the drivers. It was finally recommended that Road Safety Commission should ensure the detection, arresting and punishment of all reckless drivers in the country.

Key words: Road traffic, accident, factors.

Introduction

According to data recently released by the World Health Organization WHO, (2018), an estimated over 55 million people died each year worldwide (Nordberg, 2019). Of these, 1.3 million were due to road injuries, equating to roughly 3500 each day from road traffic injuries. By these statistics road traffic accidents (RTA) ranked among the top 10 leading causes in each year, a reality that was not existent a decade ago almost at par with chronic diseases such as HIV/AIDS and diabetes mellitus. By 2030, car accidents will be the fifth leading cause of death

in the world, if this trend were to continue (Global Status Report on Road Safety, 2021). Globally, RTA is the leading cause of injury-related deaths (Krug, 2021)

Public health experts worldwide concede that there is a global epidemic of RTA. The incidence, however, is higher in developing countries (Bener, 2022). According to the WHO, low- and middle-income countries accounted for 92% of road traffic deaths but had only 53% of registered vehicles in 2011. In Nigeria, injuries and deaths resulting from RTA are on the rise, and account for the highest proportion of deaths on the Africa continent (Asogwa, 2021). Road accidents are Nigeria's third-leading cause of overall deaths, the leading cause of trauma-related deaths and the most common cause of disability (Akinpelu, 2019). According to the WHO, the country has 1042 deaths a year for every 100,000 vehicles, one of the highest rates of road fatalities in the world; the equivalent figures for the United States and Britain are 15 and 7, respectively (John, 2020). Statistics show that there is a rising incidence of RTA in Nigeria and other developing countries with adverse physical and socioeconomic implications. However, there is yet to be a comprehensive and integrated approach to combat this menace.

In Katsina state for example, Isah (2021) reported that police have confirmed that no fewer than 17 persons were killed in an accident on Mai'adua-Shargalle Road in Mashi Local Government Area (LGA) of Katsina State. The accident, which involved an articulated vehicle with registration number XE 611 KTN, occurred at Yardudu Village in Mashi LGA. He added that the vehicle from Mai'adua LGA, was loaded with cows and passengers going to Lagos.

In addition, Federal Road Safety Corps [FRSC] (2022) reported that four persons were killed in a ghastly accident on Kurfi-Dutsinma road, Kurfi Local Government Area of Katsina State. The Unit Commander, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Kurfi, Abba Aminu, confirmed this to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Thursday in a mobile phone call. He further stated that 11 persons were involved in the accident, in which four people died, while seven others sustained various degrees of injuries.

Umar (2022) reported that at least 10 people have been killed in a road crash involving a trailer in Katsina State, said the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC). The spokesman for the FRSC Command in Katsina, Abubakakar Usman, confirmed the incident to Channels Television on Friday. He further stated that the trailer loaded with 18 passengers and an unspecified number

of cattle was said to have lost control and crashed on Thursday night at Gora village in Malumfashi Local Government Area of the state.

Road crashes are identified as one of the leading causes of death in Nigeria, especially among age groups 5 to 29. Though unfortunate, road accidents have become a normal and recurring incident in the country. In fact, hardly a day goes by without the news of a road traffic crash resulting in loss of lives and/or permanent disability (Dennis, 2022).

In 2016, the World Economic Forum (WEF) noted that road traffic deaths are the eighth leading cause of death for all age groups and the leading cause of death of children and young adults between the ages of 5 and 29 (Dennis, 2022). According to the FRSC apart from insurgency and banditry, is among the leading causes of death in Nigeria (Dennis, 2022).

According to the data from FRSC and NBS, 2020 saw the highest death toll from road traffic accidents. According to Alfa Tyre Protector Nigeria [ATPN] (2022) almost every day, the media is awash with stories of road accidents that cost the lives of Nigerians and inflict temporary or permanent injuries on some others. According to figures by the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), 10,050 people die yearly in road accidents. Statistically, this means there are 27 deaths on our roads daily and this excludes hundreds of victims who suffer various degrees of injuries and permanent disabilities from such road carnages. Road crashes have resulted in more waste of lives and property than major communicable diseases and sundry ailments put together (Nigeria Highway Code, NHC, 2021). It is against these problem that this study investigated the factors responsible for road traffic accidents in Nigeria.

Factors Responsible For Road Accidents

While a number of factors are responsible for road traffic crashes in Nigeria, a recent report by Dataphyte identified speed violation, light/sign violation, wrongful overtaking, dangerous driving and tyres bursting as causes of road traffic accidents in the country. Break failures, route violation and bad roads are also noted as some of the causes. (Dennis, 2022). Other factors are discussed as follows:

1. Over speeding:

Some road users have formed the habit of over speeding each time they are on the road. Some believe in their ability to maneuver any difficult situation on the road, while others believe in their vehicles ability to wriggle out of any danger. But these perceptions are not always correct.

According to the FRSC, 50% of road crashes in Nigeria are due to over speeding. Motorists should therefore know that over speeding kills (ATPN, 2022).

2. Bad roads:

The failure of successive governments in Nigeria to fix the death traps called roads in Nigeria has no doubt caused so much pain to temporal and frequent road users. The bad roads across the nation are nothing to write home about. Government at all levels must be alive to their responsibilities to make sure all roads in Nigeria are safe and motorable. While road users should also exercise caution when driving in danger spots like potholes ridden portions, dangerous bends, roads threatened by erosion, roads enveloped with darkness at nights e.t.c (ATPN, 2022).

3. Over loading:

This offence is mostly committed by commercial vehicles and some haulage companies. Although some private road users are also known to over load their vehicles too such that it endangers their lives because it makes the driver of the vehicle uncomfortable, puts the vehicle in distress and also affects other road users (Alexander, 2022)

4. Bad weather:

Many road accidents are as a result of bad weather which the driver can be aware of or not. Driving in an unfriendly weather condition can be a culprit in accidents. It is important for road users to check the weather conditions of their routes through the Nigerian Meteorological Agency to be sure that their intended routes and destination are weather friendly. Driving in unfriendly weather conditions can hamper smooth driving and can cause damage (Alexander, 2022).

5. Poor vehicle maintenance culture

Road users must ensure that their vehicles are in good condition before they hit the road. This way, road crashes caused by badly managed vehicles are avoided to the barest minimum. Many people fail to engage in simple maintenance check and servicing of their vehicle such as the break, tires, steering etc. All parts of the vehicle must be checked and re-checked to ensure the vehicle is in perfect condition before embarking on any journey, however short (ATPN, 2022).

6. Bad driving habits:

It is important for road users to respect other road users by ensuring their driving is not only for their own safety, but for others. Adhering to all traffic rules and regulations is also very important for safe driving. Indeed, road users' behaviour has to change dramatically. Ignorance, lack of information and neglect on road safety in Nigeria has now made many preventable road carnages appear normal (Alexander, 2022).

7. Fatigue:

This is mostly common among commercial drivers and drivers of Very Important Personalities (VIPs) and government officials. These drivers are usually over worked and hardly observe rest. It is important for principals of such drivers to ensure that they observe maximum rest always, so that they can be refreshed and geared up for the next journey (ATPN, 2022).

8. Bad Tyres:

Most vehicles on Nigeria roads use fake/ expired tyres. Some drivers even prefer to buy second hand tyres (popular called Tokunbo). These tyres poses a dangerous threat to safety on the wheel. That is why, we at Alfa Tyre Protector Nigeria Enterprises emphasis the purchase of quality brand new tyres from us (ATPN, 2022).

9. Lack of proper driving education

Many drivers didn't even go through driving school, so they are not licensed and not well informed about certain driving rules, skills and safety tips. This can include simple things like using seat-belt, having a fire extinguisher in the car, checking car before usage, the right side of the road to overtake, speed limit according to the type of road and a host of others (ATPN, 2022).

10. Driving under influence of substances

Driving under influence can affect the concentration and performance of a driver, this is because drugs like alcohol, marijuana and a host of others interfere with brain activity. For instance when alcohol is taken, the first place it hits is the cerebellum which controls our sense of balance and movement, this is the reason people begin to stagger and loose balance when they are drunk ((Alexander, 2022). Drugs can interfere with the ability to drive, sometimes drugs that are prescribed by doctors have sedative (i.e, sleep inducing) effect on the driver. Coffee and kolanut are stimulants that tend to increase the alertness of drivers. Another stimulant popularly taken by these drivers is Indian hemp which is a street drug, and sometimes cocaine. Such stimulants

may work for some time and then tiredness and sleep come suddenly while driving, resulting to road traffic crashes.

12. Lack of Concentration:

Drivers often engage in things that distract their attention while driving. Such things include discussions with passengers, answering phone calls, eating, gesticulating, changing radio station or cassette. Lack of concentration is very dangerous as it takes only a moment for crashes to occur. The vehicle in front may stop abruptly or a child may run into the road suddenly; hence anything can happen. Drivers should always be alert, always anticipate danger (Alexander, 2022).

12. Unsafe overtaking:

Nigeria Highway Code [NHC] (2021) reported that unsafe overtaking such as overthinking at the blinds area or on the bridge is responsible for about 45% of all crashes. Careless overtaking and poor judgment combine to cause road traffic crashes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that in many cases road traffic accidents do not just happen on their own rather cause by behaviour of the road users and negligence of government to repair bad road in the country. Among the notables factors responsible for the high rate of road accidents in Nigeria include: reckless driving, lack of driving skills, overloading, over speed, fatigue, poor maintenance of vehicles, unsafe overtaking, influences of substances, bad road and whether condition.

Recommendation

Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendation were made:

1. Road safety officer should arrest and punish any driver found driving under the influences of drugs or alcohol.
2. Government should ensure the construction of new roads and renovation or repairmen of all bad roads across the country.
3. Road safety agency should ensure the detection, arresting and punishment of all reckless drivers in the country.
4. Road safety officers should ensure that all road uses are observing the safety measures for vehicle driving

5. National Association of Road Transportation Owners (NATO) should ensure that all commercial vehicles are of good condition right from Moto pack stations before loading the passengers.

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