



## ABSTRACT

The study reviewed literature that pointed out the causes of accidents within Lagos state and identified most of them to include; over speeding, wrongful overtaking, drink-driving, taking of dangerous drugs, use of handset while driving, driving against the traffic, over loading of the vehicle, engaging the use of bad shaped vehicles, abandonment of damaged stationary vehicles in the middle of the road and many more. It was found out that so many lives and properties are lost day in day out, as well as a

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## OAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS, A MENACE TO PUBLIC SAFETY: REVIEW OF EXTANT LITERATURE ON MASS MEDIA EFFORTS

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## Introduction

The sanctity of human life transcends all indices of human existence, be it geographical, political, religious, socio or ethnic. There is no community of humans where human life is not seen as precious and sacred. Human life is simply invaluable. Be that as it is, however, road traffic accidents pose great danger to life and personal wellbeing of people. As in other developing countries, road traffic accidents in Nigeria is one the most serious problems in need of pragmatic solution (Faheem, Shah, Farooq & Malik, 2017). Road traffic accidents constitute a menace in modern times. Both the developed and the developing nations of the world have suffered from varying degrees of road accidents (Afolabi & Gbadamosi, (2017). According to the World Health Organization statistics, (WHO 2016) 75% of deaths from road traffic accidents occur in developing countries although they own only 32% of the motor vehicles in the world. While the annual fatality rate per 10,000 vehicles ranges from 20 to 200 in low- or middle-income countries, it varies between 1.5 and 5 in industrialized countries (Ogunnaike &, Adewole, 2017). The estimated global economic cost of traffic accidents is \$518 billion per year. The share of the developing countries is \$100 billion which accounts for 1 to 3% of their gross national product. In Nigeria today, hardly does a day go by without the occurrence of a road traffic accident leading to generally increasing incidence of morbidity and mortality rates as well as



colossal loss of properties worth billions of Naira in the process. The role of the media (radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards, handbills and social media platforms) as agents of awareness which is very crucial to ensure efficient, accurate and credible coverage of road safety messages was extensively discussed and analyzed. Road traffic media messages have been identified as strategies which influenced the attitudinal change of Commercial Drivers' Safety Consciousness and Practices in Lagos state.

**Keywords:** Safety, Knowledge, Practices, Traffic, Mass Media, and Commercial Drivers

financial cost to both society and the individuals involved (Ankomah, Adebayo, Arogundade, Anyanti, Nwokolo, Inyang, Oladipupo, & Meremiku, 2014). Information on some of these traffic accidents get to the news rooms of media houses and are reported, while majority go unreported. Nigeria has the highest road accident rates as well as the largest number of deaths per 10,000 vehicles (Okafor, Azuike & Okojie, 2017).

Federal Road Safety Corps and National Bureau of Statistics paint a frightening reality about road traffic accidents in Nigeria. The agencies put Nigeria's road casualty average at 33.7 per 100,000 kilometers. Nigeria road traffic accidents claim 41,709 lives in eight years i.e., between 2013 and 2020. This translates to 5339 in 2013, 4430 in 2014, 5400 in 2015, 5053 in 2016, 5049 in 2017, 5181 in 2018, 5483 in 2019 and 5574 in 2020. The first half of year 2021 also recorded 3648 deaths from auto crash (Bitrus, 2021; Amata, 2022). Although, death from road traffic accidents have become common place in Nigeria, they are preventable. National Bureau of statistics blames crashes on speed violation, wrongful overtaking, use of handsets while driving, drink-driving and other factors. Individual carelessness on the part of the driver is unlimited. Commercial drivers overload their very old vehicles, indulge in excessive speeding, and often drive against the traffic, especially when the traffic is heavy. According to Punch Editorial of 16th August, 2021, road traffic deaths and injuries remain abnormally high in Nigeria. Quite often, large number of road users get killed while others suffer disabilities of varying degrees. Some others get burnt alive before help could reach them. These crashes happened any time of the day.

WHO affirms that road traffic accidents cost low and middle income countries between 1.0 and 2.0 percent of their Gross National Product annually. This is more than the development aid the countries receive. In the first three quarters of 2018, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) estimates the economic losses of road traffic crashes at #9.8 billion. In 2007, African Leaders at the Road Safety Conference, recognized the successes recorded in developed climes and adopted a declaration to mainstream road safety management in individual countries. 37 countries, including Nigeria assented to this declaration. The key turning point in road safety management occurred in March 2010



when the UN Global Decade of Action was endorsed by over 100 countries. The Decade of Action requires all assenting countries to make concerted efforts at reducing road crashes and fatalities by a minimum of 50% by 2020. The guiding principles underlying the Decade of Action is the development of a road transport system that accommodates human error and the vulnerability of the human body.

On the national level according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), (2019) Nigeria in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2018 exhibited road transport data reflecting a total of 2,532 road traffic accidents. Speed violation is reported as the major cause of road crashes in the quarter and it accounted for 52% of the total road traffic accidents. Dangerous driving and wrongful overtaking followed closely as they both accounted for 9% and 8% of the total road crashes recorded respectively. A total of 8,406 Nigerians got injured in road traffic accidents and 7,815 of the 8,406 Nigerians that got injured, representing 93% of the figure, are adults while the remaining 591 Nigerians, representing 7% of the figure are children. 6,194 male Nigerians, representing 74%, got injured in road crashes in Q4 while 2,212 female Nigerians, representing 26% got injured. In the statistics jointly released by FRSC and NBS, the year 2020 saw the highest death toll from road traffic accidents with 5574 deaths and 3648 injuries in the first half of 2021 (Amata, 2022). This is worrisome. One would have expected the reverse to be the case with the year 2020 given the many months of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of this study is to review extant literature on menace of road traffic accidents vis-a-vis media efforts. Lagos is the location of the study.

This study adopts literature review as a methodology with the use of desk review vis-à-vis reading, analyzing, evaluating and synthesizing ideas. The choice of this methodology is based on the premise that it identifies, records, articulates, evaluates, synthesizes submissions and findings of scholars' literature in line of the research study.

## **Literature Review**

### **Mass Media and Road Safety, a Symbiotic Relationship**

The media play significant roles in the modern day society. They inform, educate, entertain as well as persuade members of the public about issues of interest. Road traffic accidents and road safety knowledge and practices are no exemptions in this regard. Mass media present the opportunity to communicate to a large number of people and to target particular groups of people. Mass media are vehicles of transmitting information to a large heterogeneous audience. They are the social organizations that generate and distill information which they eventually disseminate to the people. Hardly anyone can live today without the mass media. They supply information, guide our steps in decision making, entertain us so as not to be weighed down by the stress of work (Daramola, 2012). The media is popularly known to be channels of information and education. It is an indisputable fact that they are indispensable when it comes to dissemination of information and educating the populace, while it is widely known as an agent of change and transformation (Ajaegbu, Akintayo, & Akinjayan, 2015). This is generally so because the media cut across literacy barriers. The role of the media in road safety issues cannot be



over-emphasized. The media have access to populations and can serve as agents of awareness which is very crucial to ensure priority, accuracy and coverage of road safety messages. Furthermore, media in any society play roles that are germane to the development of that society, and that of the members within the society. This means that there is an umbilical cord relationship between the mass media and society. According to Odorume (2015), the media enhance socio-economic development, resulting from a causal relationship between the mass media (radio, television, newspapers and magazines as well as other associated platforms) for mass-based engagements and interactions and the society. Examples of media of mass reach in our contemporary world are newspapers, magazines, radio, billboards, handbills, television, movies as well as online channels such as websites. Social media platforms of Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and so on form part of the long list. Some media of mass reach have been specifically designed to address safety issues on Nigerian highways. Two examples of such are the National Traffic Radio(NTR) broadcasting on 107.1 and the Lagos Traffic Radio (LTR) broadcasting on 96.1. The first one is the official radio of the FRSC, while the second one is the official radio of LASTMA (a Lagos state government traffic law enforcement outfit). Two of the many road safety programmes aired by LTR are “Your Side Mirror” and “Safety Train”. The first one is aired Mondays to Fridays 8:30-10a.m. The presenter is Victor Oteri, while the executive Producer is Tayo Akanle. “Safety Train” is aired every Tuesday, 4:30-5:00p.m. Fisayo Williams doubles as the producer and the presenter. Billboards carrying road safety messages are visible on Nigerian highways.

#### **Safety Consciousness, Safety Knowledge and Safety Practices as Antidote to Road Traffic Accidents**

Safety is inherent in everyday activity. It is the condition of being protected from something that is likely to cause danger, risk, and injury (Ölçer & Durmuşçelebi, 2018). It is synonymous to welfare, well-being and being protected. High premium is placed on personal safety by every individual. Knowledge is regarded as facts, information, and skills acquired by a person through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. Knowledge is a personal trait which is defined as socially-determined impulse control that facilitates task and purpose-focused behaviors. For example, when an individual thinks before taking an action, adapts norms and rules, and planning, organizing, and prioritizing tasks are considered to be the characteristics of the conscious person (Szcukowski, 2017). Being safety conscious is characterized by a conscious personality like rigor, carefulness, organization, accountability and commitment (Britton, 2014). The term safety knowledge, therefore refers to the individual's awareness and manner about safety issues and operates both cognitive and behavioral. Cognitively, safety knowledge implies mental awareness of safety in the workplace. Behaviorally, it indicates the awareness of which behaviors will improve operational safety (Awan, Mushtaq, Abid & Khatib, 2017). Safety knowledge in the broadest sense, is based on the awareness of safety threats and are values, attitudes, and beliefs underlying the ability to effectively deal with potentially dangerous situations. Road safety concerns the vehicle, the infrastructure, the user and the environment, and



assures elimination of danger for road users and the surroundings, i.e. property and environment. The ultimate aim of communities should be the absence of any risks, crashes, fatalities and injuries during transportation. This is rather an optimistic scenario for the current situation of European transport, since many safety issues still need to be addressed.

Most of the countries in the Asian and Pacific region employ road safety publicity techniques based upon posters, leaflets, billboards, newspapers, and often radio and television. However, few of these campaigns appear to be planned in the systematic manner necessary to ensure success. One of the key components that need to be considered in this sector is safety publicity which can be used to achieve various aims and objectives. In general, the aims of such publicity are to change the road users' behavior, attitude or knowledge in order to increase road safety. However, usually, road safety campaigns can succeed if advertising is only one of the elements in the campaign and usually not the key element (Elliott, 1989).

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Perception Theory**

Perception is the way in which people perceive media messages targeted at them. It is the process of making sense out of experience (Burgeon & Ruffner, 1978). Perception is how the individual makes sense of his or her world (Corner & Hawthorn 1980, 29). The perception of an individual varies, one has to be exposed to a message before you can attend to it, you have to pay attention before you can perceive the message, and you have to perceive it before you can retain it for later recall. It is natural, that people seek information that caters for their own interests, confirms their beliefs, and boost their own ego while avoiding those that are contrary to their own predisposition and attacks their self-image. Because the eye processes information much faster than the brain can interpret, the human has to select which information to pay attention to at any given time, in order to avoid confusion. Physiological needs (hunger, stress, bad eyesight), physical hardship, boredom, assumed familiarity with message content can also severely affect the span of attention. People tend to perceive and decode messages in the light of their previous experiences and current disposition (needs, moods and memories). The language people speak and words used also tend to circumscribe their perception. (Folarin, 1995). Some messages are forgotten more quickly than the others, and people tend to accurately remember messages that are favorable to our self-image than messages that are unfavorable. The relevance to need, the method of transmission, the interest and belief of the receiver are also known to affect retention rate. Selective exposure, attention, perception and retention work together.

#### **Relevance of the Theory**

The theory explains how the media can influence the commercial drivers. The theory is based on the assumption that the audience needs to be exposed to the messages on road traffic accidents, to which they will pay attention. The information in turn will influence



their perception to take action. This implies that when messages are placed on billboard, television, radio social media and so on, it leads to an awareness of the content of the message passed to the public after being aware, it leads to the commercial drivers giving attention to the content of the message. This is because the audience selectively chooses, attends to perceive and retain the media messages on the basis of their needs and beliefs. Among the theories reviewed for the purpose of this study, Health Belief Model and Haddon Matrix theories are considered to perfectly underpin the study with the former stressing that there is a check on people's behavior if they see themselves as susceptible to a particular health hazard and they perceive it as a serious problem, they consider the benefits of the preventive action taken as effective while the latter offers special strategies designed for road traffic injury prevention. In conclusion, the theory perceives the recipients as actively influencing the effect process, since they selectively choose, attend to, perceive and retain the media messages on the basis of their needs and beliefs.

### **Empirical Review**

#### **Empirical Review of Mass Media Role in Curbing the Menace of Road Traffic Accidents**

Arthur (2015) examined the effect of media campaign messages on commercial drivers' change in attitude on the causes of road traffic accidents in Nigeria. A cross-sectional study of commercial drivers from various motor parks in a Nigerian urban city was carried out using questionnaires. Every volunteer was asked to complete a questionnaire that revealed patient's demographics, age, and education level, time of accident and perceived cause of the accident. All participants were males and licensed drivers. The study found that drivers in the age range of 38 - 47 years (n = 174; 46.77%) were mostly involved in road traffic accidents. Road accidents were much more prevalent on rural roads than on urban roads. Majority of the drivers (n = 198; 53%) had secondary level of education, while 112 drivers (30%) had primary level of education. One hundred and eight drivers (29.03%) believed the accidents were as a result of the road. 21.24% (79) stated that the time of the day, which could be in the daylight, dusk or at night, could influence road traffic accidents. Furthermore, Morar (2016) examined the effect of mass media campaign on road safety in Kenya: A study of knowledge, attitudes and practices of drivers, passenger service vehicles utilizing a sample of 160 drivers of public service vehicles (PSV), the study investigated how knowledge, attitudes and practices /behavior of PSV drivers contribute to road crashes.

A combination of purposive and random samplings were utilized to select the study sample. Stage selection was done purposively while route and respondents were randomly selected from the list kept by stage clerks. Primary data were collected by the use of self-administered open and closed ended questionnaires. Data were analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics organized and presented using tables, charts and opinions scales. The chi-square test was used to test for association between variables. The study found that levels of awareness/knowledge about road safety were almost universal but ironically this did not influence the number of accidents that occurred. Also bad driving habits or violation of traffic rules was not found to affect the number of accidents



occurring. The drivers were found to have negative attitudes towards law enforcement officers leading to many unnecessary road crashes. They were also found to have negative attitudes towards their work and to be dissatisfied with their work as drivers. The study also found out that driving schools were not being monitored or evaluated and that there did not exist a standard curriculum for all driving schools in Kenya. In another study, Zhang, Rui, Yuxi, Yingshi, Wei, Chang, Fuwei & Yong (2015) investigated risk attitude, perception, behavior and personality as indicators of a driver's risk awareness in China. In order to develop a risk awareness model, a survey was conducted in China. Based on the survey, exploratory factor analysis of the scale revealed three risk awareness factors (risk attitude, risk perception and risk behavior), also named first class indices. The respective weights of the 14 second class indices and the 3 first class indices were calculated. Results of statistically analyzed survey showed that some drivers in the study have a high-risk awareness.

The study of Akaateba & Amoh-Gyimah (2013) examined driver attitude towards traffic safety behaviour in Kumasi: the gender and age dimension. This study investigated age and gender related differences in drivers' self-reported attitudes towards traffic violations and the gains or motivations influencing the violation of traffic laws in Kumasi. A total of 285 drivers were sampled for the study drawn from local bus terminals and taxi stations, work places, universities and other gatherings within the Kumasi Metropolis. Both self-completed questionnaires and interviews were used for the study. The results of the study showed that gender and age have significant influence on attitudes towards the commission of traffic violations though not by a large margin. The perceived gains associated with traffic violations also to a large extent influence driver attitude towards traffic violation in Kumasi with men being more motivated by the perceived gains to be derived from traffic violations than females. Neither significant nor great age differences were found regarding the extent to which perceived gains influenced the commission of traffic violations. Atubi (2012) worked on the determinants of road traffic accident occurrences in Lagos state. The data collected was analyzed using multiple regression.

Maduagwu (2017) conducted a study on the knowledge and attitude towards road traffic codes among commercial drivers in two urban towns of Nnewi and Awka in Anambra State, South-East Nigeria. All were males, with a mean age of  $30 \pm 8.9$  years. The results showed that 176 (32.6%) possessed good knowledge of road traffic codes and safety, while 35 (6.5%) exhibited good attitude towards them. Both knowledge of and attitude towards traffic codes and safety improved with increase in educational level ( $p < 0.005$ ,  $p < 0.001$  respectively). The younger drivers also possessed statistically significant better knowledge of traffic codes than their older counterparts. Attitude to traffic codes and safety had no association with age of the drivers. In South-Western Nigeria (Lagos and Ile-Ife), a study conducted by Akinwumi, (2019) evaluated the knowledge, attitude, and practice of some commercial drivers on safety measures. The all-male study participants had a mean age of  $35.1 \pm 8.9$  years and 8.4% had no formal education. The drivers had poor knowledge of safety measures as only 20% supplied information on known safety devices.



In Australia, the Driver Intervention Program (DIP) is a 90-minute interactive small group workshop that aims to address the over-representation of young drivers in crashes by confronting them with the potential risk and consequences of road trauma. Any driver aged 25 years and under who has breached the conditions of their South Australian Learner's Permit or Provisional License and has been subsequently disqualified from driving is required to attend. The general quality of empirical evidence about the effectiveness or otherwise of these programs is quite poor. Such programs are cheap (compared with the costs of deaths and injuries), and even if of low effectiveness are nevertheless sometimes worthwhile. An analysis of randomized controlled trials found that driver education courses led to earlier licensing but not to a reduction in road crashes. A similar analysis found no benefit to post-licensing driver education.

Farah, Abdulmohsen, Al-Zalabani, Marwa, Reem (2015) worked on the changing trends and crucial preventive approaches to road traffic accidents (RTAs) adopted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) over the last 2.5 decades, and to analyze aspects previously overlooked. This systematic review was based on evidence of RTAs in KSA. All articles published during the last 25 years on road traffic accidents in KSA were analyzed. This study was carried out from December 2013 to May 2014 in the Department of Family and Community Medicine, Taibah University, Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, KSA. The study found that Road traffic accidents accounted for 83.4% of all trauma admissions in 1984-1989, and no such overall trend was studied thereafter. The most frequently injured body regions as reported in the latest studies were head and neck, followed by upper and lower extremities, which was found to be opposite to that of the studies reported earlier. Hospital data showed an 8% non-significant increase in road accident mortalities in contrast to police records of a 27% significant reduction during the years 2005- 2010. Excessive speeding was the most common cause reported in all recent and past studies. Disparity was common in the type of reporting of RTAs, outcome measures, and possible causes over a period of 2.5 decades. Phillips, Ulleberg and Vaa (2011) worked on a meta-analysis of 67 studies evaluating the effect of road safety campaigns on accidents. A total of 119 results were extracted from the studies, which were reported in 12 different countries between 1975 and 2007. After allowing for publication bias and heterogeneity of effects, the weighted average effect of road safety campaigns is a 9% reduction in accidents (with 95% confidence that the weighted average is between -12 and -6%). To account for the variability of effects measured across studies, data were collected to characterize aspects of the campaign and evaluation design associated with each effect, and analyzed to identify a model of seven campaign factors for testing by meta-regression. The model was tested using both fixed and random effect meta-regression, and dependency among effects was accounted for by aggregation. These analyses suggest positive associations between accident reduction and the use of personal communication or roadside media as part of a campaign delivery strategy. Campaigns with a drink-driving theme were also associated with greater accident reductions, while some of the analyses suggested that accompanying enforcement and short campaign duration (less than one month) are beneficial. Overall the results are consistent with the



idea that campaigns can be more effective in the short term if the message is delivered with personal communication in a way that is proximal in space and time to the behaviour targeted by the campaign.

### **Conclusion**

The existing literature establishes the fact that road traffic accident is a serious public safety issue that needs prompt attention. Millions of lives are lost annually across the globe to this demon called road traffic accident. Hundreds of children drop out of school due to loss of family bread winners. A lot more suffer permanent disabilities and many more suffer varying degrees of injury and s. The review also indicates that the media play significant role in bringing road safety messages to commercial drivers which in some cases have brought better driving culture among the drivers. The study identified the various media of mass reach as the means through which road traffic safety messages get to commercial drivers, thus increasing their safety awareness. These eventually influence their attitude towards preventing loss of lives and properties across Lagos state.

### **Recommendations**

The study, therefore, recommends that the media should intensify their efforts in getting safety messages across to the commercial drivers. The media should enrich road safety media messages and make them appealing to target audience, who in this case ,are the Lagos commercial drivers. Measures should be put in place to apprehend the traffic offenders by the state government to compliment effect of mass media approach to make the state accident free. Lagos state road maintenance agency should intensify efforts to fix the bad portions of the roads within the state The state should create funding agency for road projects in the state for possible construction of new road ,as well as maintenance and expansion of existing ones to reduce traffic congestion and accidents.

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