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## ROAD SAFETY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

Road Traffic Accidents constitute a major cause of death and loss of property in the country, depleting the workforce of the nation and causing psychological trauma for victims and their relatives and automobile fire inspired by collision of petroleum tankers on the roads has led to the loss of billions of naira. Accident statistics by the Federal Road Safety Corps and other independent agencies underscore the adverse effect of road accidents on the country development. This study focuses on Road safety and National development. The objectives of the study were to: (i) identify and assess the key causes of road crashes provoking injuries and deaths in Nigeria. (ii) examine the impact of road accidents and crashes on National development. (iii) highlight the mechanisms that will enable prevention of road crashes and road accidents in Nigeria. The study relied on the cognitive model for its theoretical explanation with an adoption of survey research method. Both Primary and Secondary data generated from respondents and other statistical sources served as a basis on which conclusions were drawn. The result of the analysis shows that; (i) Bad roads predispose road crashes and accidents in Nigeria (ii) Human factors affect road safety in Nigeria (iii) Road crashes and accidents have negative effect on national development. The study therefore recommended that government should provide world class standard roads and road signs to enhance safety on Nigerian roads. Insurance mechanisms should be put in place to support and compensate victims of road crashes, and proper regulations should be made to ensure the safety of commuter's lives and properties on the road.

**Key words:** Accidents, Safety, Roads, Insurance, People.

### Introduction

Roads are found in every society, the degree of safety of roads in each society varies one from another. Road development adds value and spurs growth, the potential significance of road development for investment, trade, growth and poverty alleviation cannot be overemphasized (Ighodaro, 2008). Roads facilitate the provision of services as well as quick delivery of goods to consumers; however roads could be a death trap and could slow down the process of delivery of goods and provision of service where the issue of safety is handled carelessly. According to Sumaila (2013), Nigeria has a total road length of about 194,000 kilometers; comprising 34, 120 kilometers federal, 30,500 kilometers state and 129,580 kilometers of local roads. The road system is classified into four broad categories: the Federal Trunk 'A' Roads, owned, developed and maintained by the federal government. The Federal Trunk 'F' Roads acquired by the Federal government from state government with a view to upgrade them to federal status. The Trunk 'B' Roads and Trunk 'C' Roads owned and managed by states and the local government respectively. The federal, state and local government has the responsibility for ensuring safety on roads

under its jurisdiction. Nigeria population density varies in rural and urban areas at about 51.7% and 48.3% respectively and translates to a population road ratio of 860 persons per square kilometers indicating intense traffic pressure on the available road network (ibid). Undoubtedly, this immense pressure contributes to the high road traffic accidents in the country (FRSC, 2012)

It is important to note that accidents with various degrees of fatality are recorded daily on Nigerian roads with each tier of government accusing the other of negligence and poor road management. The third Global status report on road safety 2015 shows that low and middle-income countries are hardest hit, with double the fatality rates of high-income countries and 90% of global road traffic deaths. Unfortunately, Nigeria is one of the countries bedeviled by preventable road accidents and deaths. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution in 2010 that led to the establishment of the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011–2020). The resolution called on member states to take the necessary steps to make their roads safer. In spite of the United Nation General Assembly resolution, road traffic accidents





goes unabated in Nigeria, lives and properties are wasted on the roads, some of which were under reported by the media. In view of this, a research on Road safety and National development is apt and timely in order to ensure the realization of the resolution of Decade of Action for Road safety and ensure the achievement of 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

### Statement of the Problem

The challenge of road safety in Nigeria and in other countries of the world is enormous. Global status report on road safety 2013 of the World Health Organization reports that about 1.24 million people die annually on the world's roads, with 20–50 million sustaining non-fatal injuries. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) estimated about 907 900, 1.3 million and 1.4 million deaths from road traffic injuries in 1990, 2010 and 2013, respectively (GBD, 2013). The status report on road safety in countries of the WHO African Region (2009) stated that Nigeria has the second highest rate of road accidents among 193 ranked countries of the world. The roads have become killing fields without protection for their users. Sheriff (2009) and Eze (2012) noted that Nigeria has one of the highest road accidents rate as well as death per 10,000 vehicles. Similarly, Balogun (2006) also submitted that deaths and fatalities from road traffic accident in Nigeria rank among the highest in the world. Travelers in Nigeria usually heave a sigh of relief when they get to their destinations safe and would give testimony in church upon a safe trip.

According to Oyeyemi (2003), human factor causes about 80% of road traffic accidents recorded in the country. This includes among others; dangerous overtaking at bends or crest of a hill, over speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol /drugs and the use of mobile phone while driving. Sometimes, the vehicles used are mechanically deficient, not road worthy and do not meet minimum safety standards. The three tiers of government in Nigeria have failed to maintain and manage the roads as appropriate. Bogus road construction contracts are awarded on yearly basis, yet the roads are not better than they were several decades ago. Corruption, tribalism and favoritism take the lead in the award of road contracts to incompetent companies. Road safety enforcement officers were not able to discharge their duties in line with the best standards; they are under staffed, and lack the requisite materials, equipment and technical know-how to ensure safety on the

roads. It is against this backdrop, this research examines Road safety and National development.

### Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the key causes of road crashes provoking injuries and deaths in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the impact of road accidents and crashes on National development?
- iii. What are the mechanisms that will enable prevention of road crashes and road accidents, in order to enhance National development?

### Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to examine Road safety and National Development. Specific objectives of this research are to:

- i. Identify and assess the key causes of road crashes provoking injuries and deaths in Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the impact of road accidents and crashes on National development.
- iii. Highlight the mechanisms that will enable prevention of road crashes and road accidents to enhance National development

### Brief Literature Review

The attention given to road safety has increased with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda includes setting a goal of reducing road traffic deaths and injuries by 50% in 2020 among others thereby ensuring the safety of lives and properties on the road. Road crashes and accidents are not properly documented in Nigeria and most times records of accidents say nothing about the cause of such accident. Beside this, simply counting accidents and casualties gives an incomplete indication of the level of road safety (Al Haji, 2003). Therefore, there is a need for road safety performance indicators that are causally related to accidents or casualties, used in addition to a count of accidents or casualties in order to indicate safety performance or understand the process that leads to accidents. The safety performance indicators would reflect the current safety conditions of road traffic system, measure the influence of safety interventions, and compare different road traffic systems (Vis, 2005).

Contrary to the general belief that Nigerians possess very low level of awareness on the causes of road traffic accidents, previous research has shown that Nigerians know quite a lot about what could cause road traffic accidents (Asalor, 2010). The causes of road traffic accidents depend on a list of factors which can be broadly divided into:

- (i) Vehicle operator or driver factors



- (ii) Vehicle factors
- (iii) Road pavement condition factors
- (iv) Environmental factors.

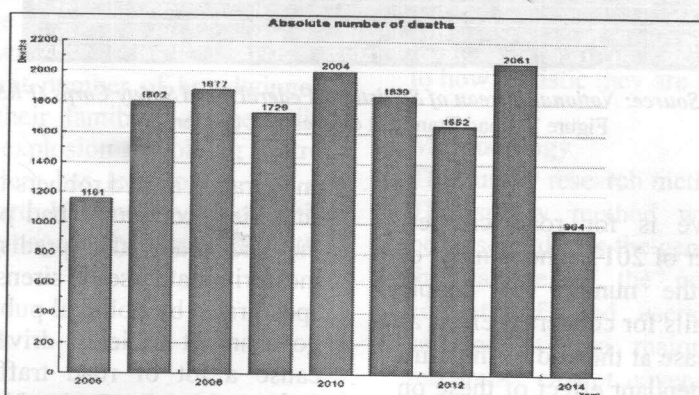
Road traffic accident can be caused by one or a combination of these factors. The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) is the government agency with statutory responsibilities for enforcement of road safety regulations in Nigeria. The agency was established in 1988 by Gen. Ibrahim Babangida through Decree No.45 of 1988 as amended by Decree 35 of 1992 popularly known as FRSC ACT cap 141 laws of the federation of Nigeria. The commission in recent years appeared to be redundant but for issuance of drivers' license, vehicles plate numbers and a few regulatory activities. The statutory functions of the Federal Road safety commission according to Agbeboh and Osarumwense (2013) include:

- (i) Making the high way safer for motorist and other road users.
- (ii) Recommending work and devices designed to eliminate or minimize accidents on the high way and

advising the government on what to do about road problem in Nigeria.

- (iii) Educating motorist and members of the public on the importance of discipline on the road.
- (iv) Design and production of drivers' license and plate numbers to be used by various road users.
- (v) Giving prompt attention and care to victim of road accident, conduct researches into the causes of the accident and method of preventing them and putting into use such findings.
- (vi) Determining speed limit for all road users.
- (vii) Providing roadside and mobile clinics for the treatment of accident victims free of charge.

These statutory functions of the Federal Road safety commission are laudable. One would expect a safer road where accidents and road crashes is reduced to the barest minimum with the statutory functions highlighted above; but data on road crashes and violent death proves otherwise. The number of violent deaths in Nigeria caused by road accidents per year from 2006 to 2014 is shown below:



Source: Ukoji (2015) Trends and Patterns of Road Accidents in Nigeria

**Figure 1:** Number of violent deaths in Nigeria caused by road accidents from 2006 – 2014.

A critical study of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2017) showed that 11,363 road accidents were recorded in 2016. The report stated that speed violation was the major cause of the accidents in 2016, which accounted for 33.86 per cent of the total road accidents reported. Loss of control and dangerous driving followed closely as they both accounted for 15.43 per cent and 8.53 per cent of the total road accidents recorded. A total of 30,105 Nigerians got injured in the accidents recorded in 2016. Twenty eight thousand two, hundred and fifty (28,250) of the 30,105 Nigerians that got injured, representing 94 per cent of the figure, are adults, while the remaining 1,855 Nigerians, representing six per cent of the figure are children. Twenty two thousand, seven hundred and five (22, 705) male

Nigerians, representing 75 per cent were injured in the accidents in 2016, while 7,400 female Nigerians, representing 25 per cent got injured. Similarly, the report stated that a total of 5,053 Nigerians got killed in the road accidents recorded in the period under review. The report also stated that 4,696 of the 5,053 Nigerians that got killed, representing 93 per cent of the figure were adults, while the remaining 357 Nigerians, representing seven per cent of the figure are children (Adebowale, 2017). Data on the category of vehicles involved in the road accidents reflected that 56.6 per cent of the vehicles are commercial (8,876) and 41.6 per cent are private (6,521). A similar report of road traffic crashes for first quarter 2017 is displayed below on state by state basis:





STATE	FATAL	SERIOUS	MINOR	TOTAL CASES	NUMBER INJURED	NUMBER KILLED	TOTAL CASUALTY	PEOPLE INVOLVED
Abia	6	10	3	19	41	11	52	160
Adamawa	3	29	4	36	147	49	196	316
Akwa Ibom	7	12	2	21	36	15	51	117
Anambra	15	40	14	69	146	20	166	496
Bauchi	21	60	2	83	373	45	418	643
Bayelsa	1	7	1	9	15	1	16	50
Benue	18	20	45	83	222	25	247	449
Borno	3	12	1	16	86	10	96	111
Cross River	6	16	3	25	72	9	81	148
Delta	29	18	0	47	254	60	314	420
Ebonyi	25	28	9	62	102	31	133	317
Edo	20	45	1	66	209	34	243	512
Ekiti	6	10	1	17	37	11	48	94
Enugu	24	36	7	67	221	37	258	526
FCT	43	201	63	307	562	66	628	1373
Gombe	15	17	3	35	159	22	181	246
Imo	14	31	2	47	201	32	233	359
Jigawa	9	32	0	41	170	13	183	290
Kaduna	91	135	10	236	1023	216	1239	1939
Kano	29	63	1	93	422	63	485	710
Katsina	27	29	0	66	410	84	494	661
Kebbi	14	24	0	38	151	56	207	249
Kogi	31	51	3	85	351	60	411	749
Kwara	16	22	2	40	151	28	179	368
Lagos	16	77	35	128	287	34	321	689
Nasarawa	28	29	78	135	411	53	464	756
Niger	33	112	5	150	446	51	497	844
Ogun	29	62	7	98	310	50	360	685
Ondo	38	55	1	94	357	61	418	904
Osun	19	29	8	56	186	37	223	566
Oyo	37	57	3	97	363	59	422	914
Plateau	5	16	30	51	172	15	187	342
Rivers	4	14	8	26	55	7	62	175
Sokoto	3	14	1	18	82	8	90	137
Taraba	4	34	0	38	127	6	133	209
Yobe	14	10	1	25	197	41	238	273
Zamfara	10	18	4	32	118	45	164	233
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>1,485.00</b>	<b>358.00</b>	<b>2,556.00</b>	<b>8,672.00</b>	<b>1,466.00</b>	<b>10,138.00</b>	<b>18,230.00</b>

Data Source: National Bureau of Statistics / Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC)  
Figure 2: Road Transport crashes first quarter, 2017

The data displayed above is for road crashes/accidents in the first quarter of 2017. The number of casualty coupled with the number of people involved in road crashes calls for concerted effort as the figure may likely increase at the end of the third quarter of the year. The attendant effect of these on National development cannot be overemphasized.

### Causes of Road Accidents Provoking injuries and Deaths in Nigeria

The causes of road accidents in Nigeria are basically divided into three: Human factors, Mechanical factors and Environmental factors (Ukoji, 2014). The human factors include; Visual (Eyes) problem, driver fatigue, poor knowledge of road signs and regulations, illiteracy, health challenges, excessive speed, drunkenness, drug abuse, lack of concentration and over-confidence while driving among others. In addition, poor budgetary allocations and contract evaluation could be seen as one of the human factors. Poor funding for road construction, embezzlement as well as misappropriation of Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) funds leads to insufficient human and material resources to man and manage the roads. This according to Sumaila (2013),

encouraged armed robbers to carry out their ungodly activities around the bad portions of the roads and the bad roads also predispose road crashes. The indiscriminate use of sirens coupled with very high speed rates by political public office holders such as government vehicles' drivers' has been reported to cause a lot of road traffic accidents in Nigeria (Agbeboh & Osabuohien-Irabor, 2013). For instance in 2016, a renowned Nigerian Professor Iyayi was a victim of such incident, he died in an accident involving the convoy of Kogi State Governor, Captain Idris Wada of Kogi State.

The mechanical factor ranges from engine problems, brake failure, poor vehicle maintenance, and use of expired tyres that get busted on the road. Nigeria like other African countries imports second hand vehicles from Asia, Europe and the United States. There are import standards and age limits for vehicles coming into the country, but enforcement of the standards is not strict as government agencies saddled with the responsibility of enforcing compliance usually compromise in the face of monetary inducement. Moreover, vehicle safety laws do not effectively enforce safety standards, and enforcement of vehicle inspection regulation is weak.



The environmental factors may be natural such as heavy rainfall leading to slippery roads, harmattan, reflection of sun rays on windshield, heavy wind, bad and poorly maintained roads e.t.c. These factors no doubt contributed to lack of safety on the roads with the attendant impact on National development. In addition, Ogunsanya (1993) observed that rural urban migration also contributed to road accidents as roads leading to and within large cities like Kano, Kaduna, Lagos, Ibadan, and Port Harcourt faces congestion which in turn leads to accidents due to general impatience and ill-tempered nature of road users.

### **Impact of Road Accident on National Development**

The implications of road accidents in Nigeria are colossal. Pratte (1998) observed that persons injured in road accidents on Nigerian highways no longer participate in the economic mainstream, and this amounts to a loss of labour of millions of person's years to the nation. The attendant loss of productive human lives, man hour and resources worth billions of naira in a country like Nigeria where fatal road accidents happens on daily basis is better imagined than experienced. The social and psychological traumas associated with road accidents are enormous as a significant number of breadwinners are taken away from their families unexpectedly. The carnage of fire explosion involving petrol tankers, trucks and trailers has lead to the loss of goods and properties worth billion of naira over the years and all these have negatively impacted on the nation development

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Cognitive model**

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the cognitive model. It is a psychological approach that analyses road safety on the basis of cognition. On this note, Michon (1985) provides a review of drivers' behavior models and a critique of behavioral adaptation theories. His focus is on developing a control theory approach based on understanding the underlying cognitive mechanisms of individuals. This is to allow for the development of a computational framework to predict the implications of different safety policies. Michon's view is that risk homeostasis and compensatory models do not explain which stimuli affect perceptions of risk, and that they have no individual based theory. He cited the work of Klebelsberg (1971, 1977, published in German) as developing a control process based on balancing subjective and objective risk. He made the argument that when objective risk exceeds perceptions of risk, then there may be a safety problem.

Alternately, when perceptions exceed the objective risk level there is then a safety margin that is too large. Klebelsberg is essentially proposing a risk threshold model similar to Näätänen and Summala (1974); that is safety problems do not arise until a given perception of risk exceeds the objective level of risk. Using a driving simulator, studies have been used to empirically investigate these issues, and have found some empirical support (Lewis-Evans, de Waard, & Brookhuis, 2011). Michon (1989) provides additional discussion of the distinction between "aggregate models" of road user behavior and "process models" of individual driver behavior. This provides a useful dichotomy between economically-based models that describe aggregate behavior and psychology-based models of individual driver behavior. It is stated that the former assume rational behavior, while the latter can explain mental processes and actual behavior. This really gets at the crux of the difference between psychological versus economic approaches to studying road traffic safety. One benefit of economic or aggregate approaches is that they are more practical and easier to develop; alternatively, psychological approaches have been tested using simulator studies which will suffer from caveats as to how realistic they are for modeling real behavior.

### **Methodology**

The survey research method was used for this study. The survey method was considered appropriate because it allows the generalization of findings from the sample of the population. The population consists of road users; drivers and commuters selected at two major motor parks since the researcher cannot cover all the motor parks in the country. Purposive sampling was adopted in selecting 100 respondents for this study. However, both primary and secondary data were used for this study. Copies of questionnaires were administered on respondents. Frequency distribution and simple percentage were used to analyze the result. The combination of results generated from the primary and secondary sources were used to draw inference on road safety and national development.



**Distribution of Respondents Opinion on Causes of Road Accidents**

Questions	Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Bad roads predispose road crashes and accidents in Nigeria	Strongly Agree	40	40
	Agree	38	38
	Strongly disagree	11	11
	Disagree	5	5
	Indifferent	6	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Human factors affect road safety in Nigeria	Strongly Agree	36	36
	Agree	47	47
	Strongly disagree	7	7
	Disagree	4	4
	Indifferent	6	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Road crashes and accidents have negative effect on national development	Strongly Agree	44	44
	Agree	33	33
	Strongly disagree	10	10
	Disagree	10	10
	Indifferent	3	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field work, 2017

**Discussion of Findings**

The result above shows that 40% of the respondents strongly agree that bad roads predispose road crashes and accidents in Nigeria. 38% of the respondents agree with the same position, 11% of the respondents strongly disagree, 5% of the respondent disagree, while 6% of the respondents were indifferent. This supported Sumaila (2013), who noted that bad roads predispose road accidents and that armed robbers take advantage of bad portions of the roads to wreck havoc on vehicles and commuters thereby making the roads unsafe. Also, 36% and 47% of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that human factors affect road safety in Nigeria. 7% and 4% of the respondents strongly disagree and disagree, while 6% of the respondents were indifferent. This result corroborated Ukoji's (2014) position that human factors among others is responsible for road accident and crashes in Nigeria. Moreover, road crashes and accidents were found to have negative effect on national development as 44% and 33% of the respondents strongly agree and agree with this position respectively, 10% of the respondents strongly disagree, another 10% of the respondents disagree while a negligible 3% of the respondents were indifferent. This lend credence to Pratte (1998) who observed that victims of road accidents on Nigerian highways no longer participate in the economic mainstream, which amounts to a loss of labour of millions of person's years to the nation.

**Conclusion**

Road safety has significant effect on National development. Victims of road crashes and accidents

who are injured and those who are dead cannot make meaningful contribution to national development. A country with unsafe roads cannot compete favorably with other nations of the world. The result of this study shows that in spite of government regulations and the establishment of regulatory agencies in Nigeria, road crashes continue unabated and this has negative effect on national development. The study shows that:

1. Bad roads predispose road crashes and accidents in Nigeria
2. Human factors affect road safety in Nigeria
3. Road crashes and accidents have negative effect on national development

**Recommendations**

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations are suggested prevent and reduce road crashes and road accidents, and as well ensure safer roads for sustainable national development in Nigeria.

- i. Government should encourage international intervention on road safety for sustainable national development.
- ii. Standard road infrastructure and road signs should be provided for safety on Nigerian roads.
- iii. Insurance mechanisms should be put in place to support and compensate victims of road crashes.
- iv. Proper regulations should be made to ensure the safety of commuter's lives and properties on the road.
- v. Road safety laws should be enforced without fear or favour
- vi. Victims of road accidents should participate in sensitization campaign on dangers of road accidents
- vii. Road crashes and accidents should be properly documented; records of accidents should state the cause of such accident.
- viii. Second hand cars and tyres should be properly scrutinized on arrival into the country and expired automobile parts and tyres should be discarded to ensure the safety of Nigerians.

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