

TRAFFIC RISK PERCEPTIONS IN A GHANAIAN PUBLIC

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Introduction

Road traffic accidents are one of the most frequent causes of injury-related deaths worldwide (Åstrøm, Moshiro, Hemed, Heuch & Kvåle, 2006). According to the World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention (Peden et al., 2004) traffic accidents account for about 3000 daily fatalities worldwide. Statistical projections show that during the period between 2000 and 2020, fatalities related to traffic accidents will decrease with about 30% in high-income countries. The opposite pattern is expected in developing countries, where traffic accidents are expected to increase at a fast rate in the years to come. Data recorded in Ghana from 1994 to 1998, indicate that road traffic accidents were the main cause of injury-related fatalities during this period (Afukaar, Antwi & Amaah, 2003). If these tendencies are allowed to continue, traffic accidents are predicted to be ranked number three related to disability-adjusted lost life-years and will be on sixth place as a major cause of death worldwide fatalities in 2020 (Peden et al., 2004). Hence, road traffic accidents represent a major threat to public health.

Although the argumentation above implies that traffic related research is needed in developing countries, empirical studies of perceived traffic risk in Sub-Saharan Africa remains scarce. Due to economic growth in developing countries in this region, road traffic is expected to increase in the future. This may in turn increase the already higher risk of traffic accidents in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Measures aimed to reduce traffic accidents in industrialized societies have tended to focus upon expensive road and vehicle improvements. However, because developing countries generally do not have the economic resources for expensive improvements of roads and vehicles, alternative human factor approaches to traffic safety should be considered in these societies. Hence, one of the core aims of the present report is to investigate traffic risk perception in a developing country in Sub-Saharan Africa. The survey was also carried out in a Norwegian public. Although the results from the Norwegian survey are not discussed in depth in the present report, the