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NIGERIAN BUILDING AND ROAD RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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By

G. N. OMANGE and O. T. AFOLABI

Director: Dr. A. O. MADEDOR

Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute
(Federal Ministry of Science and Technology)
P.M.B. 12568,
15 Awolowo Road,
Ikoyi, Lagos.
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Foreword

Road traffic accidents in Nigeria have reached such an alarming level that urgent remedial action must now be evolved to reduce them. Past efforts to reduce the high level of road traffic accidents were frustrated by lack of information on the factors which contribute to the accident process. This undesirable state of affairs was due mainly to the current and uninformative method of recording road traffic accidents by the Nigeria Police. This method was developed by the Police for purely criminal purposes and was of very limited value in understanding the accident process.To rectify this situation, the Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute, after a long period of perseverance, was able to undertake a pilot study of road traffic accidents in Lagos State in 1989. A report of this study is described in this report.

The unique feature of this study was the development of a road traffic accident (RTA) recording format which covers the main factors which influence the occurrence of road accidents and which is also adequate for Police use. The data, obtained by use of this new RTA form, are analysed by means of a computer programme developed for this purpose. The analysis has revealed some important and disturbing trends which can now be directly addressed to improve road safety in Lagos State.

This report is essential for study by all involved in road safety not only in Lagos State but also in Nigeria as a whole.

A. O. MADEDOR
Director

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1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nigeria is one of the countries with the highest rate of road traffic accidents (RTA) and fatality in the world. These accidents lead to huge human and material losses at collosal costs to the nation. The identified causative factors have been variously and collectively linked to an integrated interplay between various elements which include driver/pedestrian characteristics, conditions of the road, vehicle and environment. A critical study of this interplay will provide useful information on the trend of road traffic accidents for planning purposes.

In Nigeria, there is a dearth of reliable and comprehensive RTA data to aid in the development of effective counter measures to the myraids of problems associated with road traffic accidents. This may not be unconnected with the existing accident reporting system. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has the statutory right to collect RTA data in Nigeria but mainly for litigation and prosecution purposes. Invariably not many cases are reported as parties involved in some accidents settle their disputes without involving the Police. Also some cases settled out of court are not reported. In addition, the information available at the Federal Office of Statistics are insufficient and too sketchy to allow for meaningful and comprehensive analysis and interpretation. Thus, existing remedial measures to RTA in Nigeria have not been very effective as they are usually ad-hoc in nature and characterised by non-enforcement of laws. Indeed, there is a school of thought which holds the view that existing remedial measures to RTA in Nigeria are usually directed to the wrong targets. From the foregoing, it becomes essential to develop a more effective accident reporting format which will generate data and information that would be useful in minimizing the occurrence of road traffic accidents.

1.2 Objective

The primary objective of this project is to scientifically study road traffic accidents in Nigeria starting with Lagos State with a view to identifying the nature, type, trend, frequency, causes and effects as well as the socio-economic impact of road accidents. Adequate RTA data and information for research and litigation purposes will be generated and their analysis will lead to the design and implementation of appropriate measures that may include correcting driver/pedestrian behavourial characteristics, remedying design defects in vehicles and roadways, and revision of road monitoring strategies by law enforcement agents.

This study will be conducted on a continuous basis and it is hoped that the accident reporting format developed at the Institute will be adopted for accident reporting in Nigeria.

1.3 Literature Review

It is the general opinion of observers and researchers that the road traffic accident (RTA) rates and fatalities in Nigeria ranks amongst the highest in the world (1,4,5,6). This is supported by available statistics. For example, deaths by RTA in Nigeria has been increasing over the years and second only to deaths resulting from gastro-enteritis (4). The contribution of RTA to total deaths rose from 38.9% in 1967 to 60.2% in 1974(1), and this trend has been increasing up till 1982 after which it became erratic. It has been reported that between 1974 and 1983, the number of accidents increased by 110.6%, total casualties increased by 57.1% and human population increased by 27.2% (7). Studies have also shown that Bendel, Oyo, Kaduna, Anambra, Imo, Lagos and Ogun States have individual fatality averages exceeding the national average put at 11 per